



GYPSY & GINGER

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GYPSY AND GINGER



GYPSY AND GINGER AND THEIR
FRIENDS IN THE WEATHERHOUSE

GYPSY AND GINGER

BY
ELEANOR FARJEON

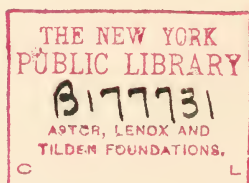


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GYPSY AND GINGER



GYPSY AND GINGER GET MARRIED

WHEN Gypsy and Ginger got married—

Oh, but before that I ought to say that those were not their names. Hers was the name of the most beautiful of women, and his the name of the most victorious of men. But they were not a bit like that really. Parents make these mistakes, and the false prophecies they invent for their infants at the font continue to be their delusions through life. But nobody else's. As they grow up the children find their level, and are called according to their deserts. And so Gypsy was called Gypsy because his hair wasn't really quite as

black as a gypsy's; and Ginger was called Ginger because her hair was the sort of hair that those who adore it love to insult. It was anything but ginger; or rather, it was everything besides. Such as mace, and cinnamon, and nutmeg, and cayenne, and ochre, and burnt sienna, and vandyke brown and a touch of chrome no. 3; and one hair, named Vivien, was pure vermillion. It was a ridiculous mixture really, and resembled the palette of an artist trying to paint beechwoods in Autumn. No, it didn't; it resembled the beechwoods. In thinking of Ginger's hair you must begin again, and wash out all the above colours, which are not really colours, but paints. Ginger's hair, like all the colours of earth and sky, was made of fire and light. That is why colours can never be painted. I'm sorry to have gone on so long about Ginger's hair, but I couldn't help it; yet I should have been able to, for the hair itself was short. When she combed it over

her head and face it hung as low as her upper lip, and so on all the way round, very smooth on the top, very thick at the bottom, and doing a lovely serpentine in and out just below the level of her eyebrows. When it got to her lip it did another one in, and never came out again.

When Gypsy and Ginger got married—

By the way, it was by the merest fluke that they did get married. A month before that Ginger chanced to be in Sussex (she never was anywhere by design), and she saw an empty cottage that took her fancy; it had a thatched roof with martins under the thatch, and two brick floors downstairs, and two whitewashed ceilings upstairs. Between the two ceilings was a green door three feet high, so you had to play at elephants to get from one ceiling to the other. When you were there you could stand upright; but if you wanted to look out of the window to talk to the martins you had to go down on your knees

again. The cottage had got two chains of hills all to itself, one on each side, and a river at the bottom of the garden, running very full and level between green grass and gold kingcups.

Therefore Ginger knew that the cottage had got to be hers. She went to the Pub to ask about it, and the Pub gave her shandygaff and cheese and said it belonged to the Blacksmith.

“Why doesn’t the Blacksmith live in it?” asked Ginger.

“He’s keeping it for his son, till he gets married,” said the Pub.

“Is he going to get married?” asked Ginger.

“Not as we knows on,” said the Pub.

Ginger finished her shandygaff so hastily that she choked, and ran as fast as she could to the Blacksmith’s, with her mouth full of cheese. Between cheese and breathlessness she was unable to speak when she got there, so she merely leaned against the

door waving her hands at the Blacksmith and his Son. They looked round at her. The Blacksmith said, "What d'ye want, missy?" and the Son didn't say anything. Ginger gulped down the last of her cheese and said, "I want to marry your son." The Blacksmith said, "He's tokened to Lizzie Hooker," and the Son didn't say anything. Ginger stamped her foot and said, "When?" "Come dinner-time," said the Blacksmith. The Son said nothing. "There!" said Ginger, "I *knew* I'd be too late." And she turned and ran down the hill and took the next train to Sligo. The men went back to their work, and come supper-time the Blacksmith's Son broke it off with Lizzie Hooker. But by then Ginger was nearly in Wales, which shows how fatal a thing is procrastination.

Gypsy knew this. He never procrastinated. But at that time he and Ginger were strangers, or this narrow squeak would never have happened. Ginger

stayed a week in Sligo, went to Abbeyville for another, came back in a hurry because the Ballet was dancing *Carnaval* on Saturday afternoon, and then ran up to Ilkley for three days. She was next said to have been seen simultaneously in Northamptonshire and Petersfield, but the certain fact is that exactly a month after not marrying the Blacksmith's Son in Sussex, she was in a boat on the Cam with Gypsy. He had come across her in the Backs five minutes previously, and asked her to go for a row. The next day Gypsy and Ginger got married.



Gypsy and Ginger spent their honeymoon on Hampstead Heath. It lasted from Saturday to Monday, and by great luck the Monday was Whit Monday. So they did the end of the honeymoon in Swings and Roundabouts, and slid several times down a little Spiral Tower, and had gingerbeer and oranges and hokey-pokey, and bought each other a great many beautifully-coloured wedding-presents, such as feathers and streamers and little balls of pink and blue and yellow and green and gold and silver, swinging from elastics, and tin trumpets, and striped cornucopias. And Gypsy came away with sixteen cocoanuts. He felt in great form, because, he said, the cocoanuts that hadn't been to the barber's

looked exactly like Ginger's head, and it was too good a chance to be missed. He did have nineteen cocoanuts, but he dropped one in the last Roundabout, very late at night when the flares were lit. It was a Motorcar Roundabout with an automatic Jazz Band in the middle of it that got jazzier and jazzier as the motors got faster and faster. But when Gypsy dropped his cocoanut he got even jazzier than the band, and stood up on the back of his seat and yelled for the thing to stop, and for several rounds had a fierce argument with an attendant, whom he accused, every time he whirled past, of conspiring to rob him of his nut. But all the attendant saw was an occasional lightning-streak of a young man with wild hair and glittering eyes and gesticulating hands, superbly balanced on one foot; and all the attendant heard was, "Nut! nut! nut!" And all the attendant said was, "'E's fair gawn orf it." As the motor-jazz simmered down so

did Gypsy, and by the time they came to a standstill he realised that he had done the attendant an injustice, so he gave the man his eighteenth cocoanut as a keepsake.

And Ginger won a penknife. She threw a little ring right over it and won it. It was an awful surprise to her, because she never knew she had it in her, but it was an awfuller surprise to the Man with the Rings, because nobody ever *did* win a penknife. He simply hated losing it. So he offered Ginger anuvver frow, free of charge, if she would give him back the penknife. She was delighted and said, "How generous! oh, but are you *sure*?" she was so afraid of doing him. The Man with the Rings was quite sure. So they put back the penknife, and Ginger threw her free throw and won it again. Then the Man with the Rings said, "Blarst!" and burst into tears.

Ginger said, "Oh, dear, what is the matter?"

“Well may you arst!” sobbed the Man with the Rings, “an’ me wiv a wife an’ five little ’uns at ’ome.”

At least, Ginger thought he said this; in Gypsy’s opinion, when they discussed it later, he said, “Five wives and a little ’un.” Either way they felt very sorry for him. Ginger dried his eyes with a beautiful orange-coloured handkerchief which was Gypsy’s chief wedding-present to her, and Gypsy gave him his seventeenth cocoa-nut. But the Man With the Rings only looked miserably at the penknife; and at last he offered Ginger free free frows if she’d give it back. But Ginger clutched it. She wanted so much to keep the penknife as a proof, and she knew that luck doesn’t go on forever. The Man with the Rings looked frightfully unhappy, so Gypsy, who could not bear a cloud on his first honeymoon, gave him half-a-crown for the penknife; and everybody was cheerful.

“It’s for you,” said Ginger when they

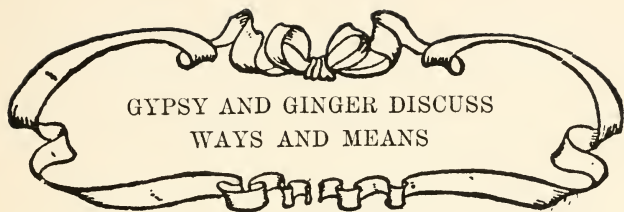
came away. "It's a wedding-present. I won it for you with the sweat of my own brow."

"We shan't have to sweat again for a long time now," said Gypsy. "Sixteen cocoanuts will be lots to live on for a bit, especially now we've got a penknife to eat them with. It's ripping, darling."

Gypsy was wrong, however. The penknife wouldn't rip margarine, much less sixteen cocoanuts. So when they got back to a little room they'd found standing quite empty and longing for them in Well Road, they had supper by the aid of the poker. Then, because they'd no pennies left for the gas-slot, and no lamp, and no candles, Ginger put a match to some shavings in the fireplace so that they could see whether they were taking bites of cocoanut or of cocoanut matting; and as the poker was otherwise engaged, she poked the fire with the penknife, which flared up like a squib and disappeared for ever. And

Gypsy and Ginger, who both adored fireworks, said, Oo—oo—oo!" and clapped their hands, and rolled themselves up on the floor and went to sleep.

Because, as I said before, the room was quite empty.



GYPSY AND GINGER DISCUSS
WAYS AND MEANS

THE day after the honeymoon, Gypsy and Ginger decided that it was time to settle down. The five days since they had first met had been as unsettled as unsettling, but now that they were used to married life and to one another—"we must make up our minds," said Gypsy, "to being humdrum for the rest of our days. There's no escape. We must Keep House." "Why?" said Ginger. "Before you're married," said Gypsy, "House keeps You. Afterwards You keep House. It's a sort of moral obligation for past favours received." "Bother," said Ginger, "is it?" "'Fraid so," said Gypsy; "and before we keep house we must discuss Ways and Means." "Isn't there a Ministry for that?" asked Ginger. "We might go to

the Minister and discuss it with him.”
“There isn’t one yet,” said Gypsy, “there won’t be one till the Householders’ Strike nearly comes off.” “Then let’s nearly strike,” said Ginger. “But we aren’t nearly Householders yet,” objected Gypsy; “which brings us back to the discussion of Ways and Means.”

They discussed Ways and Means. “I’ve often thought,” said Ginger, pulling reflectively at her single scarlet hair, “that I might be a Designer.”

“What of? Of what? Let Vivien alone, darling, she might come out, and it would be a lot of trouble putting her back in the same hole. Transplanting hairs isn’t as simple as it sounds. And there’s no money in it either, or we might go in for that. Of what?”

“What of what?” asked Ginger.

“Do you mean ‘what of—what’ or ‘what—of what?’ ” asked Gypsy.

“I don’t remember,” said Ginger.

“Well, it doesn’t matter. Let’s go back to our first subject. What would you design?”

“The dresses you see in Dry-Cleaners’ shop-windows,” said Ginger. “I often wonder who designs them, or how they think of them, or when they were in fashion. There’s the one in cherry-coloured plush, and the one with a bodice draped canary satin with a bright blue moiré sash and a deep lace flounce round the skirt; and there are the white ingenue ones, all specially designed for ingenues over thirty-five. But it must be an awfully difficult profession—I expect you have to be born with a natural gift for the wrong colours.”

“Then you’d better chuck it and think of something else,” said Gypsy, looking at her hair which had been born with a natural gift for the right colours. “But while you’ve been talking I’ve decided on *my* profession.”

“What are you going to do?”

“Invert gas-mantles.”

“Why?”

“Well, *somebody* has to. All the best gas-mantles are inverted nowadays. And it sounds a simple, even an artless job; I’m sure it lies within my scope.”

“What is a scope?” asked Ginger.

“Don’t be silly,” said Gypsy. “You must know what a scope is. You’ve got one of your own.”

“Sure?” said Ginger.

“Everybody has.”

“What for?”

“For things to lie within, of course.”

“Like a sea-chest? What sort of things—the things you so often see in the offing?”

“Oh, not nearly as many or as varied as those,” said Gypsy. “They’re simply legion. The things within one’s scope are frequently quite limited. But if you take

another peep into yours, you might find something else."

Ginger took another peep, and emerged triumphant.

"Well?" said Gypsy.

"I've found what I'm going to do. I'm going to trim coal."

"How?"

"I shall have to find out. But coal is trimmed—there's been a lot about Coal-Trimmers in the papers lately, and I should *love* it. There's such a lot of effects to be done with black—you ask Mr. Heal. Think of little white frills, and scarlet ribbons, and bright green pom-poms—"

"I never saw *my* Mother's coal come into the drawing-room looking like an African Beauty Chorus," said Gypsy, getting jealous. "I don't believe that's how you trim coal at all. I believe what coal-trimmers do is to put all those little

goldy bits in the lumps, and that must be *frightfully* hard."

"The first time I saw the goldy bits," said Ginger, "I was nine years old. And I thought all we'd got to do was to get them out with a nutpick, and our fortune would be made. And I got the Army and Navy Stores Catalogue and turned up the Oriental Section, and decided I'd have a Moorish lamp and a Benares tray, and a sandalwood box, and an octagonal coffee-stool inlaid mother-of-pearl, and some joss-sticks, and wear a pink veil with gold spangles, and lie on three striped cushions all day long, and eat Turkish Delight, and be like the Arabian Nights."

"Then you'd got a jolly thin idea of the Arabian Nights," said Gypsy. "What a lot you talk."

"I choose nice things to talk about anyhow," said Ginger, "not dull ones like upside-down gas-mantles."

"I'm not going to turn gas-mantles

upside-down any more," said Gypsy. "It's cruel, because they're subject to apoplexy. I've been getting a better idea lately. I'm going to paint Still Life."

"What sort of still life?"

"Quite a new line. I shall paint Wax-Fruit-Pieces, and Artificial-Flower-Pieces. It's never been done."

"Yes it has been," said Ginger. "The Pavement Artists all do it. The profession's absolutely overcrowded, and it's the rottenest Way and Mean we've discussed yet. I'm tired of Ways and Means, because while I go one way you mean another, and if we can't find some sort of tandem profession we might as well stop being married at once. Let's go for a walk to Golder's Green and give cocoanuts to the emus. I wonder what the weather's like."

"Go and look for yourself," said Gypsy.

"I looked first thing this morning," said

Ginger. "Don't be sulky. It's your turn."

Gypsy went outside and came in again, and said rather excitedly, "Squally and showery. What was it this morning when *you* looked?"

"Set fair," said Ginger.

"Eureka!" said Gypsy.

"What does that mean?"

"Come and play marbles with the cocoanuts," said Gypsy, "and I'll tell you."



GYPSY AND GINGER KEEP HOUSE

WHEN Gypsy said "Eureka!" he meant that he had found a Way and a Mean in which he and Ginger could work tandem and keep house together. It was really the ideal profession for newly-married couples, for it couldn't be worked single, or by two men, or two women; it literally involved a house to be kept turn and turn about; and the balance between the Way and the Mean was so exquisitely adjusted, that while Gypsy went one Way, Ginger

Meant something else entirely, and *vice versa*. This was the idea, which before long will probably be adopted by young brides and bridegrooms all over England.

“We will begin,” said Gypsy, “by building a little house, the size of Wendy and Peter’s, in a crowded thoroughfare. The house will have only one room, but two doors, both looking the same way. One door is yours and one is mine. When the weather is fine you will come out of your door while I stay inside and cook the sausages, and when it’s bad I will come out of my door while you go in and make the tea. And all the people will give us pennies for telling them what the weather is. That’s all.”

“Oh Gypsy!” exclaimed Ginger. She had always loved him, and often admired him; but now she almost respected him.

“We’d work on the swing system, you see,” said Gypsy. “I think there’d be a pivot in the middle of the floor and a little

plank on it, with me on one end and you on the other."

"We shouldn't often meet," said Ginger pensively.

"But think how jolly it would be to wave to each other," said Gypsy.

"I'd wave my orange handkerchief," said Ginger.

"I'd wave a blue one," said Gypsy. "And I'd have a little blue top hat and coat, and bottle-green waistcoat and trousers, all varnished."

"I'd have a round red bodice, very tight," said Ginger, "and a little round yellow sailor hat, and I'd be varnished too. I'm afraid your varnish will wear off in the rain."

"Well, you'll fade a bit in the sun yourself," said Gypsy.

"I'm sorry you're to have all the bad weather," said Ginger.

"It's the man's part, darling. And I

shall have a purple umbrella stuck tight to my side."

"I shall have a pink parasol," said Ginger, "that never opens. I shall be very busy in June and July, but then I love an open-air life in summer. You'll spend all August cooking sausages."

"And you'll be making tea most of January and February," said Gypsy. "Home won't see much of me at that time of year. But I shall hear you singing about the little house, and the kettle doing second, and I shall know it's worth it."

"What will happen in April?"

"Life will be a bit jerky in April," said Gypsy. "There'll be any amount of popping in and out, and I shall have to turn the sausages between the showers."

"And what about when the weather's not quite one thing and not quite another, and the barometer keeps on changing its mind about going up and down?"

"Then we'll have to do a sort of Hesita-

tion Waltz at our respective doors, and the tea and sausages must be suspended till May. Come on, darling, let's go and do it."

It was quickly done. Gypsy, who was handy with his hands, ran up a house with weather-boarding, and Ginger painted it green with a red chimney, and cottonwool smoke, because the chimney didn't lead anywhere, and the cooking was all done on a brazier. They chose Trafalgar Square for their site because it was central and populous, and collared a lot of 'bus-routes. And they could see the fountains playing, and hear St. Martin ringing Oranges and Lemons, and throw crumbs to the sparrows and the lions. They had customers from the very beginning. Their most regular ones were the men from the Meteorological Office and the weather-reporters from the newspapers. The reporters came twice a day, at noon, to find out what the weather had been in the

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morning, and at evening to find out what it had been in the afternoon. But the theatre crowds kept them busiest. After the shows on soaking nights the people would flock with their dripping umbrellas and splashing galoshes to the little house to ask the weather, and Gypsy would stand outside the door and tell them it was raining and they'd be wise to go home by the Tube. And the grateful throng paid their pennies and rushed for the Bakerloo. But on fine nights Ginger would be there, and she would tell them that the moon was shining and the stars were out, and that nothing is lovelier than the top of a 'bus on a summer night. She told it so nicely that quite often she got two-pence instead of a penny. But she posted it all in the red pillar-box where they kept their money. When it got to a pound it would burst open, but it takes a long time to get to a pound because of the price of Souchong and Best Pork. And quite often a taxi-

man or so would look in at twelve o'clock and ask for a sossidge and a cup of anything 'ot, just as a matter of course, and they always got it, and Gypsy and Ginger were really hurt when they offered to pay for this hospitality. So after that a great many taxi-men turned up regularly, and chestnut-men, and night-watchmen, and tramps, and in this way Gypsy and Ginger made many midnight friends, who are different from all the other sorts of friends there are. For at midnight we are quite ourselves.



GYPSY AND GINGER'S FRIENDS

1: THE PAVEMENT ARTIST

Most of the people who would gather in Gypsy and Ginger's Weatherhouse at midnight had lovely professions—so lovely that they often wondered they had not thought of them themselves when they were discussing Ways and Means. There were, for instance, a Rag-and-Bone Man, and a Punch-and-Judy Man, and a Balloon Woman, and a Lavender Girl. Gypsy would gladly have been either of the two first, and Ginger both of the two last. There were other people too, singers of ballads, and merchants of muffins and groundsel. But the only one whose profession they had considered even for a moment was the Pavement Artist. He was a very good artist and had once

thought of being an R.A., but in the end had decided to be a P.A. instead.

"Burlington House, pah!" he would say, half-shutting one eye as he held up in the middle distance a glistening sausage, crackling from the pan. "It is the Mausoleum of Art, my dear."

"Mausoleum?" inquired Ginger, biting off her thread, because she was neatening a loose end of braid on the Pavement Artist's shabby brown cotton velveteen jacket. She often did such jobs for her friends at midnight.

"I think it's the name of a music-hall," whispered Gypsy.

"Of a dancing-hall," corrected the Pavement Artist, "where they do the Dance of Death to the skeleton rattle of easels and mahlsticks. Vampires sit at the door waiting to suck the red blood from the veins of any living artist who ventures in. Once in he seldom, if ever, gets out again. I thought it wasn't worth

it, and I took to the art of the populace on the pavements."

"Do the populace like art?" asked Gypsy.

"They like mine," said the P.A. "I paint their dreams for them."

"What are their dreams?" asked Ginger.

"Salmon and Switzerland," said the P.A. His eyes grew hazy. "They are also mine. Have you ever eaten salmon?" He attacked Gypsy abruptly.

"Twice," said Gypsy, suppressing a hundredth part of the truth out of kindness of heart.

"Ah. So have I—tinned. And have you ever seen Switzerland?"

Ginger nodded. "She's seen everywhere," explained Gypsy apologetically.

"So have I—in Oxford Street. It was years and years ago. You sat in a pretend railway carriage for twopence, and the floor rocked, and a man turned a handle to

make the sound of wheels, and another one yodelled while a panorama of mountains and waterfalls whirled past the carriage window." The Pavement Artist's chin sank on his breast. "But I know," he whispered, "that it's not like that really, neither the salmon nor the mountains. They are not even like my pictures of them."

"What are they like?" asked Ginger, filling his teacup.

"They are like my dreams of them," said the P.A., "they are like what I feel when I do the pictures. And I only do the best parts. I do middle cuts of Scotch. I know the loch my salmon was caught in, I know the thrill of the angler as he hooks, plays, and lands it, yes, and the thrill of the fish. I have seen it come down in spate——"

"What's spate?" said Ginger. There were lots of words she didn't know.

"Sh!" said Gypsy putting his finger on

her mouth, for the P.A. was wandering in a world apart.

“Sometimes,” he murmured, “I do it raw, sometimes cooked. When it is raw the blue and silver scales of the skin are more exquisite; but when it is cooked there are thin slices of cucumber with seeds visible in their cool transparent centres. Have you ever felt the beauty of design in the heart of a cucumber?—Once I surrounded the king of fish with a thick layer of mayonnaise.” His nostrils inflated slightly. “And Switzerland!”

“Yes, Switzerland?” repeated Ginger softly. His way of saying it diffused glamour over a country which on the whole had bored her.

“Switzerland! the awful mountains piercing the sapphire with their silver pinnacles — earth’s knives thrust into heaven’s bosom! The cows with their tinkling bells leaping from crag to crag! The crimson sunsets, the purple nights!

The still lagoons with their gondolas, the Northern lights, the white palaces——”

“But,” said Ginger.

“Hush!” said Gypsy, taking her on his knee.

“Music over the water . . . the siesta at noon . . . the click of castanets, the serenata . . . the rugged firs be-diamonded with frost, the orange groves in flower . . . the Aurora Borealis. . . .” The P.A.’s voice trailed off and his eyes closed.

That night when their friends had gone, Ginger got down the little red pillar-box and looked defiantly at Gypsy. But Gypsy only said, “If you can’t shake it out we’ll prise it open with the fork.”

However, with a good deal of shaking they got out three-and-elevenpence, and that was practically all it contained.

“I’m afraid it won’t quite run to Switzerland,” said Gypsy.

“No,” said Ginger, “but it will to Salmon—Scotch. And I don’t *want* it to run

to Switzerland. It would be simply brutal to send him to Switzerland.”

“Yes, we mustn’t be iconoclasts,” said Gypsy.

“Iconoclasts?” inquired Ginger.

“The antitheses of Cook and Lunn, darling. But salmon—”

“Antitheses?” interpolated Ginger.

“There really isn’t time, darling. Salmon—”

“Then talk in words of one syllable,” said Ginger. “Now what about salmon?”

“Salmon,” said Gypsy, “is safe. It’s only the Canadians who put it in tins that are iconoclasts about salmon. I don’t see how any pavement picture of the very middlest cut could be better than the real thing, do you?”

Ginger agreed that salmon was safe.

But the P.A. didn’t.

When the following night he asked for a sausage, and Ginger shyly offered him a pink slice of Scotch with a coronet of cu-

cumber all the way round, his eyes dilated. But he shook his head.

“My dear,” he said, “do you know what are the two worst things in life?”

“Not salmon and cucumber, surely?” pleaded Ginger.

“No,” said he. “But not having what you want, and having it.” He put the plate from him. “‘Rather endure those evils’—I can’t argue about it,” he said abruptly, “I only know that if your salmon were one whit more or less delicious than mine, I should never chalk salmon on pavement again. And what would then be left me to do for a living?”

“S’rimps,” said the Rag-and-Bone Man.

“Potboiling!” said the P.A. “Can one dream of shrimps? A sausage, please.”

Artists are so hopelessly unpractical.

2. The Taxi-Man



GYPSY AND GINGER'S FRIENDS

THIS episode in the lives of Gypsy and Ginger ought really to be called *Tales of an Old Adventure*. For that, if they could believe him, was what the Taxi-Man was.

Though I have given precedence to the Pavement Artist, the Taxi-Man was really the first friend the Weatherhouse brought them. It was he who began it all by dropping in at twelve and demanding a sos-side, and it was he who spread their fame and hospitality over all the kerbs and street-corners in the city.

After his second visit he said, "Now I've

discovered you young people, I'll make you known. Not that I expect the public to be grateful for it. It never is to us discoverers."

"Have you always been a discoverer?" asked Ginger.

"Ever since I left Epsom as a boy, missy."

"How long ago was that?" she asked.

The Taxi-Man pursed up his lips, stroked his beard, and shook his head. He was an ancient and magnificent gentleman, with a beard like old Sindbad's, eyes as blue as any follower's of the sea, and a cherry nose.

"I wouldn't like to tell you, missy. You wouldn't believe me."

"She can believe anything out of reason," said Gypsy proudly.

"That's exactly what my age is," said the Taxi-Man, "and we'll leave it at that. But I don't mind admitting that I was the

First Hansom-Cabman in England, and shall be the Last Taxi-Driver."

"And what have you discovered besides us?" asked Gypsy.

"London, mister," said the Taxi-Man.

"Are you really the discoverer of London?" cried Ginger.

"That's me, missy. A fiery boy I was, all for adventure, and Epsom was too slow for me except on Derby Day. So one fine morning I rode away on the Derby Winner, a beautiful skewbald called Snow-Flame. Out of a circus he'd come, and down the course he went doing the Polka as sweet as though he smelt sawdust. The rest were nowhere. When he got to the Winning Post he jumped clean over it and then laid down and died. Beautiful it was. Even the bookies hadn't a dry eye between them. But stables was no place for Snow-Flame, nor subbubs for me. We met in a lane next day, me trundling an orange-box on wheels, for I'd been sent wooding, and

him frisking his tail and nibbling bread-and-cheese off the hawthorns. He was feeling bucked with himself, d'ye see, because he'd unlatched his stable door with his own nose and jumped a seven-foot wall afterwards. So when we met he first stood on his head, and next came right end up and stood me on mine. After that he put me into the orange-box and backed between the shafts and curled his head under his off foreleg and winked at me. So I hitched him with a rope and off he went; the next thing I knew to remember, we'd discovered London."

"What was it like then?" asked Ginger.

The Taxi-Man looked at her reflectively. "It were a queer place," he said. "Golden pavements, as I dessay you've heard, till the County Council had them took up at the rate-payers' expense; and any amount of green men and red lions running about on 'em—oh, any amount. There was a

white bear in Hampstead too, in them days."

"There still is," said Gypsy.

"Is there now?" said the Taxi-Man; while Ginger exclaimed, "What do *you* know about it, Gypsy. You might have told me!"

The two men looked steadily at each other, and then they shook their heads.

"Let that be, missy," said the Taxi-Man; "it's a man's job. To get on. There were dragons too, and a giant or so. One by one I cleared 'em out."

"Oh, but why?" protested Ginger.

"To make London safe to live in, missy."

"But it *was* safe," said Ginger, "for the giants and dragons."

"Ah, it wouldn't do for us discoverers to take account of the natives," said the Taxi-Man. "Once they're discovered, the natives must go. It's one of the rules,

missy. Them giants and dragons was a danger."

"To whom?" asked Ginger.

"To the Picadilly Flower-Girls," said the Taxi-Man, looking like Saint George's great-grandfather.

"Oh well," said Ginger grudgingly. "But I must say London doesn't seem half the place it was."

"London's all right," said the Taxi-Man. "You can't kill the nature of a place as easy as all that. No, not even by putting white men in the place of green ones, and taxis in the place of hansoms."

"That must have been a great shock to you," observed Gypsy.

"Yes, in a way it were. And a greater to Snow-Flame. We'd been reared on romance, d'ye see. We *were* romance, so to speak. It were all properly defined in those early days. On the one rank the Four-Wheels, on the other the Hansoms. They stood for safety, we for danger. The

Growlers for Mrs. Grundy, Us for the Quixotes. Everyone knew what we were then, but who's to know now? Whether you're one old lady going to her solicitor's to make her will, or nine young men on Boatrace Night, you just say 'Taxi!' Democracy, that's what it is, and you can't stop it." He emptied his cup into his saucer, and drank it at a draught. "Well," he said, "I must be taking my fare home."

"Have you got a fare waiting all this time?" asked Ginger. "What a lot of twopences!"

"This fare don't pay no tuppences," said the Taxi-Man. "I takes him a ride round London for nothing, every fine night after working-hours. P'raps you'd like to see him?"

Gypsy and Ginger went with him to the Tube corner, and there was the taxi with the hood thrown back. Doubled up inside,

as clever as a jigsaw, sat a very old red-and-white horse.

“There you are, missy,” said the Taxi-Man, “Snow-Flame! the Most Marvellous Trick Horse of This or Any Age. Winner of the Derby in——”

“What year?” asked Gypsy.

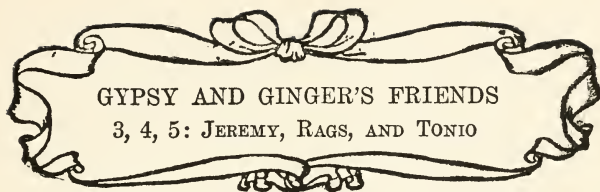
“Winner of the Derby,” repeated the Taxi-Man. “We’ll leave it at that.”

“Why do you take him for rides in the taxi?” asked Gypsy.

“Why not?” said the Taxi-Man. “Haven’t we always had our nights, him and me? Didn’t we discover London together, bit by bit, under many a full moon? Ah, missy, the fairy-tales we could tell you of the Castle that Jack Built, and of another one built by an Elephant, and then again of the End of the World, which we run across one night by pure accident in Chelsea. And though times change, shall we have no more London Nights? Taxis be blowed! Watch this.”

He undid the cab door, and Snow-Flame undid himself and got out. Then the Taxi-Man pulled out a concertina and played *The Maiden's Prayer*, and Snow-Flame waltzed entrancingly all round Trafalgar Square and died at Ginger's feet. Gypsy swears that after this he turned a somersault and climbed the Nelson Column, but Ginger was weeping as she used to weep at the end of Lord George Sanger's Circus, so she missed it.

When she wiped her eyes the Taxi-Man and Snow-Flame had gone home.



ONE night after a very hot day, when the moon was at her roundest, an unusual number of Gypsy and Ginger's friends turned up at the Weatherhouse, because everybody who was awake in London had come to dip his head in the fountains. What made Trafalgar Square still more crowded was that They had been doing something to it during the day, and had roped off the bit that wasn't quite done, and left a little man in a box inside it—"Like a Magician in his Magic Circle," said Gypsy.

"I wonder if he'd let me in to see him do tricks," mused Ginger.

"It mightn't be safe, darling. Once inside the Circle——"

"It's not really a circle, it's a square,"

said Ginger, "and you can always get out of a square because of the cracks in the corners. It's only rings there's no getting out off."

"I shouldn't risk it, though," said Gypsy. "And here comes Jeremy and Rags for their sausages."

Jeremy was the Penny Hawker. He came up with his black hair streaked like dripping seaweed all over his face, and Ginger gave him a towel. When he'd done with it he passed it on to Rags, whose hair was nondescript and tufty, and looked, after its dip, like wet fur. Rags was the Rag-and-Bone Man. He was himself all rags and bones. Ginger used to give him double portions to make him fatter, and she patched his rags with lovely bits of her old frocks, so that his knees and elbows and other places had unexpected moments of bright chintzes, and butcher-blue linen, and emerald green cloth, and orange silk. But he never got any fatter, and the holes

kept coming in new places. He walked about all day with a bag and a long stick with a little fork on the end, seeking for treasure-trove in the London streets. At night he would open his bag and show Ginger his findings, about which she was always very excited; it was usually more trove than treasure, but it pleased Rags greatly when she praised his cleverness.

“Fancy being able to spot a black-headed pin in the London dust,” she would say. “What an eye you must have, Rags! And what an almost perfect pin!”

“’T’s nuthin’ much,” he would say modestly. “One day I s’ll find sumptin’ reely good.”

He was a shy hoarse little man, but he had a secret ambition which he had never told anyone until he met Ginger. His ambition was to find a diamond—a reely big diamond, as big as the Koh-i-Noor. With this object he had devoted himself from boyhood to the London Streets. “An’ it’s

there, mum!” he insisted eagerly, “I know it’s there, and one day I s’ll find it.” His cheeks, which were usually grey, got pink when he talked of it.

Ginger shared his hope. “What will you do when you’ve found it, Rags?” she asked.

“I s’ll take you to the Pit of the Lyceum, mum,” said Rags, getting pinker.

“Oh!” said Ginger, overwhelmed.

Meanwhile he often made her a little present from his treasure-bag, such as a hairpin, or an empty matchbox. And she would thank him and say how useful the matchbox would be to keep the hairpin in, seeing how short her hair was.

Jeremy was on the whole a better-dressed man than Rags. This is to say, he was more orthodox. He had all the finishing touches which go to make the Perfect Nut. If he had not always a hat, he had always a hat-guard; though he sometimes lacked boots, he did not lack

boot-buttons; and he was frequently without a collar but never without a stud. It was said of him in the Weatherhouse, not that he was exquisitely dressed, but that he was exquisitely appointed. He was able to be so because of his profession. His hawker's tray was nearly as interesting to Ginger as Rag's bag. One day it would be one thing, one day another.

"How do you decide?" asked Ginger. "I don't believe I *could* make up my mind, Jeremy, between Jumping Rabbits and Dying Pigs."

"Lord bless you, Ginger," said the Penny Hawker, sticking his penny monocle in his eye (he was the only one who addressed her by her name, but he did it with the manners of Bond Street) "nobody chooses in Hawker's Hall."

"Hawker's Hall?" inquired Gypsy. "I've heard of Fishmonger's Hall."

"No connection," said Jeremy. "I don't understand the Fish Trade myself,

though I once had a friend in Whelks. In Hawker's Hall we all meet at daybreak and draw lots for the trays. It's the only way. There'd be too much jealousy otherwise. And the element of chance lends a zest to each day. Even if you've had the bad fortune to draw matches from Monday to Friday, you never know but what Saturday may bring you the little men who take their hats off."

"Oh, I *love* them!" cried Ginger clasp-
ing her hands.

"You shall have one," said Jeremy, "the next time I draw them. I haven't had them this month, but luck must turn some time or other. It's like gambling—the next deal may always bring you four aces. Here's Tonio."

Tonio was Chestnuts in winter and Hokey-Pokey in summer. He was Hokey-Pokey now. He always brought glamour into Trafalgar Square, no matter what the night. In winter he sang of the Italian

Chestnut trees, in summer he carolled Neapolitan boat-songs over the splashing water. On the clear warm night of a full moon, such, as this, Tonio was a poet and irresistible. He was gallant, too, and generally had a lady with him. To-night it was the Strawberry Girl, and he was telling her how singularly her eyes reminded him of the stars overhead. "Wot things you do think of," said the Strawberry Girl. A small procession trailed after them, to ask Ginger what the night was like.

"It's the hottest night of the season," said Ginger, free of charge. "Hokey-Pokey all round, please, Tonio."

Gypsy promptly fetched the pillar-box. The pound which would burst it was always being pulled down like this, like the telegraph wires trying to climb out of sight of the railway-carriage window.

Tonio served Hokey-Pokey all round. Rags had never had any before. It gave

his bones a frightful shock, and he had to take quick gulps of hot tea between cold gulps of hokey-pokey.

“Regard ze moon,” said Tonio, sticking a wafer in Ginger’s portion. “Ees she not beautiful, laika pineapple ice?”

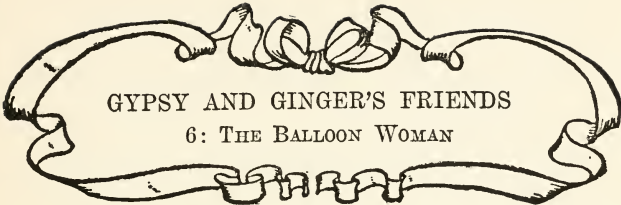
“Like a yeller dimond,” gasped Rags, between agony and ecstasy.

The Taxi-Man closed an eye and said, “More like the bottom of a pewter tankard seen through Four-Ale.”

“Or a new penny,” said Jeremy.

“Like the very best thing a penny can buy,” cried Ginger, “like a penny balloon. Oh, don’t I wish I could buy the moon for a penny!”

“Why not, child?” said the Balloon Woman, coming round the corner.



GYPSY AND GINGER'S FRIENDS

6: THE BALLOON WOMAN

THE Balloon Woman was very large and round, but she was equally buoyant. Her roundnesses seemed less due to fat than air. Her puffed cheeks looked as though you might buy them for a penny apiece, if red was the colour you wanted. This was the first time Gypsy and Ginger had met her, but the others seemed to know her well. Just now she had only a few balloons tied to her apron-string, and under her arm she carried a great bowl of water which she had dipped out of the nearest fountain.

Setting it down she repeated, "Why shouldn't you buy the moon for a penny, child? Anything can be bought for a penny, God bless me. Ask Jeremy."

"Quite true, Mrs. Green," said Jeremy. "A penny, as all children know, is the most complete form of wealth there is. There is no need it cannot compass and satisfy."

"But you have first to get your penny," said the Pavement Artist, "which often doesn't happen once in twenty-four hours. And when you've got it, your difficulties have merely begun. You might not only know what penn'orth you want, but where it is to be got, and how to get there. You might decide to spend it on a peacock's feather, which can very likely be bought for a penny in Peru. But of what use is that to you in Pimlico?"

"You confine yourself to London, P.A.," said Jeremy. "London's brimming over with penn'orths."

"Even in London," said the P.A. dreamily, "you have to spot your man. If only it were all trades to all men the job would be easy. But if you're hungry and want a penny bun, it's no use applying to

the 'bus conductor; and if you've a lust for travel and want a penny ride, it's no use asking the flower-girl; and if you're a nature-lover and need a bunch of violets, it's no use looking for the evening news-boy; and if you're a reader with a passion for fairy-tales, why go to the post-office?—and if you want to speed a letter of life or death to the golden West, the rosy South, the dim blue East, or the wild grey North——”

“Drat you and your ifs!” scolded Mrs. Green. “I’ve no patience with you Artists. I deal in facts I do, and balloons is facts till they bust.”

The Punch and Judy man added scornfully, “Too many Ifs was the undoing of Hamlet. When it come to the point he couldn’t even do a penny murder.”

“I had a mother once,” said Ginger hurriedly, for she felt a certain amount of feeling in the air, “who wanted to celebrate my Elder Sister’s Twenty-first

birthday by coming to the tea-party as Hamlet at four o'clock in the afternoon. My Mother was very impulsive. I had to spend all my young life in suppressing her impulses."

Gypsy looked at his wife with renewed interest, and a very little incredulity. "I wish I'd known your Mother," he said. "Why shouldn't she be Hamlet at four o'clock in the afternoon on your sister's twenty-first birthday if she wanted to be?"

"Because I was being Hamlet myself," said Ginger, "that's why. And two of anything's silly. At least, it is if it's Hamlet."

"It isn't," said Gypsy, "if it's chocolate eclairs."

"Yes, it is," said Ginger. "Anything less than six chocolate eclairs is *very* silly. Will you have a sausage?" she asked Mrs. Green.

"Not me, child. I shall want all my breath," said Mrs. Green, emptying a little

packet into her bowl and stirring it with a stick until the liquid became glutinous and frothy. Then she pulled a pipe out of her apron pocket.

“Bubbles!” cried Ginger dancing up and down. “You’re going to blow bubbles!”

“God bless the child, no!” said Mrs. Green. “Balloons.”

“Are balloons blown too?” asked Ginger.

“How else did you suppose they was made?” asked Mrs. Green.

“I never did suppose,” said Ginger meekly. “I’ve always taken balloons for granted until something happened, and they weren’t there to be taken for anything.”

Mrs. Green put the bowl of the pipe in the liquid, and the stem of it in her mouth, and puffed. In a moment a flame-coloured balloon had risen like the sun out of the sea. Everybody clapped. Before she took

it off the pipe Mrs. Green secured it with a string, and added it to the bundle on her apron. Then she blew a purple one like a plum, then a peach-coloured one, then half-a-dozen pale green ones, like a cluster of grapes. It was prettier than fireworks, and more wonderful than Indian Mangoes that bloom in thirty seconds and die in fifty-nine.

“What a lovely life you have!” breathed Ginger. “I wish I were a balloon girl.”

“There’s no rest in it,” said Mrs. Green. “It’s like cooking and housework—has to be done all over again next day. The children are that demanding and that destructive. You can’t make these things to last like the pawnbroker’s balls or the Dome of Saint Paul’s.”

“What lungs Sir Christopher Wren must have had,” said Gypsy.

“And Mr. Attenborough,” said Ginger.

“Ah,” said Mrs. Green. “But it’s come and go with balloons.”

"I know," sighed the Pavement Artist.
"They come and they go like our dreams."

"They don't do nothing of the sort," said Mrs. Green. "They come and they go like our dinners. But while they're there, there they are. Dreams don't neither come *nor* go. I've no patience with dreamers.—What's yours, Tonio?" She had a great stock now, and was nearly at the bottom of the bowl.

"An orange, eef the Signora pleases," said the Hokey-Pokey Man, "to reminda me my native land."

Mrs. Green blew him an orange balloon and said as she gave it to him, "There's all the orange-groves of Italy in that, Tonio. You, Rags?"

"A dimond one," said Rags, and she blew him a white balloon as clear as glass. "What's inside there," she told Rags, "would make an African Millionaire take to Abyssinian Pearls in sheer despair."

For the Lavender and Strawberry Girls

she blew their own colours, telling the one that she now possessed enough lavender to sweeten all the laundries in London, and the other sufficient strawberries to feed the House of Commons at tea through a whole summer. The Crossing Sweeper asked for a green one, because grass needs no sweeping except by the wind, and he got one as green as the dome of Amberley on the South Downs. Jeremy chose copper, and the Balloon Woman assured him that all the slot-machines in England held less than he when he had it, like a fat brown purse, in his hands. Everybody had something blown from the Balloon Woman's bowl. Gypsy had two, one as blue as night and one as blue as day, because he loved all the time there is, and blue beyond all the colours there are.

But when Mrs. Green turned at last to Ginger and asked her what one she'd have, Ginger, who was always as immoderate as a child, pointed up in the sky and said,

“I’ll have that one, please.”

“What a nuisance you are, said Mrs. Green. “But I suppose you must have it, or you’ll be crying for it. I expect it can be managed from Nelson’s shoulder. Just hand me your pick, Rags.”

And this surprising woman began to mount the steps of the Column, pick in hand. But she had got no further than the lions when a little voice cried through the night,

“Come out o’ that, will you? Just you leave the moon alone.”



THE voice came from the roped-in enclosure in the Square where They had been doing something to London during the day. They are always doing something to London, either taking it away or putting it back, scraping it, painting it, or tarring and feathering it. It was one of Gypsy's fears that one day They would take it all up at once and put it back in the wrong places; and it was one of Ginger's hopes that They would.

"Think how ripping it would be," said Ginger, "if one morning you found the Temple Gardens in the Camden Road."

"But think how horrible it would be," urged Gypsy, "if one morning you found the Camden Road in the Temple Gardens."

"Don't!" shuddered Ginger.

“Well, that’s the risk, you see. You couldn’t be sure.”

“Why does one sound all right and the other all wrong?” wondered Ginger.

She wondered about it often after this, and decided that the next time They took up the Camden Road They’d better lose it, and put apple-trees from Nowhere there instead.

But this is a digression.

“Just you leave the moon alone!” cried the wild little voice from the Night Watchman’s box in the Square.

Everybody turned to look. What they saw was a small fierce figure in an old top hat and a long-tailed coat dancing excitedly round and round the roped-in enclosure. In one hand he had a telescope, and in the other a pair of field-glasses, both of which he flourished in the direction of the Balloon Woman.

“You would, would you?” he shrilled.
“Come out o’ that, you Mrs. Green.”

“Oh dear, oh dear,” said Ginger. “I’m afraid this is all my fault.” She hurried to the enclosure. “Please do be quiet and tell me why you don’t want me to have the moon.”

“The thoughtlessness of the young!” said the little man, mopping his brow with a blue handkerchief dotted with white stars. “It’s all on account of the likes o’ you that the likes o’ me has to watch the night. A nice mess she’d get into otherwise.”

“I’m so sorry. Come and have a sausage,” coaxed Ginger.

He shook his head. “Can’t,” he said shortly. “What d’you suppose the rope’s here for?”

“To keep us out,” suggested Ginger.

“To keep me in,” said the wild little man. “Set a thief to catch a thief, and one that never knew his place to keep the night in hers. Ah, many and many a time They’ve set me to watch her because They

knew I'm up to all her tricks. But They have to coop me in, or I'd be off. On land They put a rope round me; on sea They put me up the mast."

Ginger beckoned to the others, and they gathered round from the Weatherhouse. Gypsy brought the teapot with him, and the Night Watchman was given a cup across the barrier.

"What do you have to watch the night for?" asked Ginger, putting in five lumps.

"Enough o' your sugar," said the little man. "That's *her* dodge, too, sending out all her stars when a chap's got to try to keep his senses steady. Too much stars and sugar goes to the heart. What do I have to watch her for, the jade? A pretty question! So as nothing gets stolen, for one thing."

Ginger put her face in her hands.

"You may well!" said the Night Watchman. "Many and many a moon has you young folk tried to steal. Sometimes

you're too sharp even for me. But the moon's not the worst of it. It's keeping the constellations in order, especially in August when the shooting stars are about. It goes to the heads of the old ones when those young ones gets frisking, and it takes all my time to stop the Horse from kicking the Hunter in the belt, or the Twins from parting company. 'Move on there!' I tell them, till I'm hoarse. Comets are disorganizing too, in their way, but we've generally time to prepare for them, like the Lord Mayor's Show. And then the fixed stars want watching; they're liable to come un-fixed."

"Why shouldn't they?" demanded Gypsy. "About time they did."

"Futurist!" said the Night Watchman. "But of course it isn't only the stars. There's plenty else to watch the night for."

"What?" asked Gypsy.

"Ghosts," said the Night Watchman.

“And fairies.” He checked himself, and handed back his cup abruptly. “There’s all the sounds, too, that can’t be heard by day—such as the dust settling, and the pavement cracking, and the tide turning in the Thames. Ah, the pavement takes a lot of watching, and *still* you can’t help the cracks coming. Sometimes one big square will split into half-a-dozen little ones before you can say Knife!”

“Would that stop it?” asked Ginger.

“It would stop anything if you said it quick enough,” said the Night Watchman, “but you never do. You may try again and again, and in the end be no better off than the fools who try to say Jack Robinson. And again, the night must be watched for the thoughts that won’t come out in the light. Some of them are too shy. But the boldness of them after dark! They take a lot of managing, for they’re a disorderly crew, bad *or* good. Then on land you watch the night for its moths and

bats, and on sea for its wrecks and its sails. But perhaps the best thing to watch the night for, on sea or land, is morning."

"Why?" said Gypsy.

"Because then They come and take the rope away," said the Night Watchman.

Then he went into his box and sat on his stool and put his telescope to his eye and glared at the Pole Star. If the Pole Star had had any idea of side-slipping it abandoned it instantly, and kept as steady as the Rock of Gibraltar.

"Who do you think he is?" asked Ginger.

"Nobody knows," said the P.A.

"I expect he's Mr. Maeterlinck," said Gypsy, "or Mr. Devant. But I don't care who he is, darling, and one of these days I'll steal the moon for you under his very nose. Meanwhile have half my balloons."

He gave her the bluest balloon, and she hung it over her door of the Weather-house, and he hung the other over his.

And Jeremy and the rest went back home, if they had one, and hung up theirs over their beds, if they had any.

But nearly all the balloons had disappeared by the morning.



GYPSY and Ginger first saw the Groundsel Man in the early morning. It was very early morning indeed. The moon had just gone out, and a good deal of Mother-o'-pearl was left in the sky, and there was a faint glow over Fleet Street. Of course Gypsy and Ginger couldn't see Fleet Street, but they looked that way for the glow. The streets were quite empty when the Groundsel Man came along, and for this reason alone you couldn't have helped noticing him. But you would have noticed him even in a crowd. His basket was slung in front of him by a strap over his shoulders, and he limped a little, but his limp, instead of being a drag, only seemed to make his step livelier, so that he came

down the pavement on the light jerky hop of a chaffinch hopping down a potato-row after the digger in hope of worms.

“He’s just like the little rabbits Jeremy sells,” said Ginger.

“If you could look under his trousers,” said Gypsy, “you’d find that instead of feet he has two spiral springs.”

“It’s quite easy to look under his trousers,” said Ginger, “and he prefers not to wear socks.”

“Another Simple Lifer,” said Gypsy. Most of their friends were.

“But he *has* got a pretty hat,” said Ginger. “I wish I’d got one like it.”

His hat was the chief reason why you’d have to notice the Groundsel Man in a crowd. It was a straw hat of all sorts of shapes and colours, with no top to the crown and whiskers round the brim. And it was weighed down by a glorious wreath of buttercups. The Groundsel Man’s basket was also half buttercups, as well

as groundsel and chickweed, and in one hand he had a short thick thorn-stick, as black and shiny as an old clay pipe, and in the other he carried a great branch of white wild roses like a banner. As he stepped by he said,

“Good morning, sir and ma’am. A fine night it’s been and a finer day *’twill* be.”

“Are *you* telling *us* that?” said Gypsy doubtfully.

“I am, sir. You’re clever little people,” said the Groundsel Man cheerily, “but it’s not the likes o’ me you can tell about the weather. My kind needs no weather-houses.”

“Not even in London?” said Ginger, bringing the teapot.

“I don’t live in Lunnon, ma’am. I only passes through. Lunnon’s a cage, she is. But her’ll never ketch *me*.”

“Where do you live?” asked Ginger, filling a cup for him; and Gypsy offered him his tobacco pouch.

“Thank you, ma’am. Thank you, sir. I lives anywheres that a bird may, ma’am, and after all that’s anywheres there is. In sedges and tree-tops and the flat tops of hills and hedgerows and the faces of cliffs.”

“And the sky?” asked Ginger so eagerly that Gypsy surreptitiously tied a string round her ankle to haul her in by if she flew up too suddenly.

“As oft as not,” said the Groundsel Man sipping his cup and crumbling his bread. More than half the crumbs fell to the ground, and he let them lie.

“Why do you come to London at all?” asked Gypsy.

“To open the bird-cages, sir.”

“What sport,” said Gypsy. “Do you ever get caught?”

“Very seldom, sir. I does it after dark. I takes note of my street by day, and by night I sets it free. Sometimes the cage is hung outside the house, and then it’s

easy. But other times it stands inside the window, and then I has to force the catch. I'm doing Lunnnon street by street. When her's empty I'll do Manchester. But so fast as I empty her, her fills up like Philemon's pitcher."

"What sort of birds do you let out?" asked Ginger.

"Every sort, ma'am. Canaries and parrots and redpoles and skylarks—yes, ma'am, I've known houses as even keeps skylarks in cages. Once I found a Red Cardinal in Bethnal Green. I hopes he flew back to South Ameriky, but if not there's warm spots in Hampshire."

"You'll have a grand time," said Gypsy, passing him the matches, "the night you do the Zoo."

The Groundsel Man puffed hard, and disappeared entirely behind a cloud of smoke; out of which he piped shrilly, "Flamingoes!" The cry was like a thin

streak of lightning passing through a thunder-cloud.

Ginger asked, "What happens when you *do* get caught?"

"I sells them a bunch of groundsel for their dickies," he said. "Oh, that's all right, ma'am. The birds doesn't suffer, neither way. And so soon as the basket's empty, back I goes to fill it up."

"Back where?" asked Ginger.

"Anywheres," he said vaguely.

"Do you sell buttercups too?" she asked.

"No, ma'am. Buttercups is my pleasure. Well, so is the groundsel too, mine and the birds'. But this sort of gold can't be sold for pence to the keepers of cages. They'll sometimes cage robins, ma'am, robins that'll come into your house for company like your brother. But what sort of company is one in a cage? Will they play pretty like the Robin of Cold-harbour?"

"Who's he?" asked Gypsy.

“A little chap I knows. He goes to church on week-days. First time I seed him he was sitting in the pulpit singing fit to bust, so sweet as any parson.”

Gypsy said doubtfully, “Do parsons?”

“Don’t they, sir? I supposed they did, else why do the folk go? But I never heard one myself. It’s mostly some other bird I’m listening to o’ Sundays, the daws at their games round the chalk-pits, or the plovers swooping on the Downs, or the larks you can’t see for the air in between. But when my Robin’s done his Glory-Glory, down he hops to a pewback, and so hops all down the aisle like a stone on a pond, skipping one pew at each hop. And when he gets to the end he thinks, What can I do next? and he looks at the stained glass windows and Pooh! cries he. And he chooses a clear pane of glass under a Saint, and flies up and sits against it with the sun on his breast as red as a ruby. And there he sings Glory-Glory all over

again, and out he flies. Would you cage that bird, ma'am?"

"I wouldn't cage anything!" said Ginger angrily, "and I'm going to Manchester by the next train."

Gypsy took another reef in his string.

"Well, it's time somebody did," said Ginger.

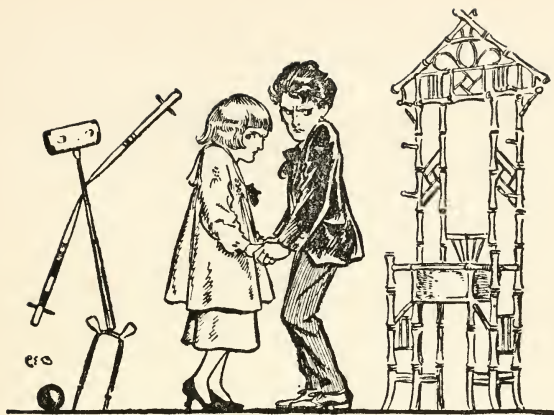
"Don't you fret, ma'am," said the Groundsel Man. "I'll get there all in good season. Would you like some buttercups?"

"Yes, please," said Ginger, running for a bowl, which she filled at the fountain.

The Groundsel Man put his buttercups into it carefully, and then with a sort of hop and flutter he was up on the roof of the weatherhouse, perched for a moment on the chimney, where he stuck his branch of wild-rose. The glow from Fleet Street was now so strong that the small white burnet blossoms looked like puffs of golden

smoke. Then he gave another flutter and disappeared.

Ginger ran round the corner to catch him, but when she got there she could see nothing but the sparrows quarrelling round the Nelson Column, and the pigeons flying from the spire of St. Martin's to the Dome of the National Gallery.



GYPSY AND GINGER TAKE THINGS SERIOUSLY

It was after the visit of the Groundsel Man that Gypsy realised that life is not all play.

“The time has come,” said Gypsy, with his mouth full of tacks——

He was trying the effect of sausages in festoons round the walls of the Weather-house. Something had to be done with the sausages, which accumulated daily in increasing quantities as Gypsy and Ginger accumulated friends. There was no cup-

board-room in the Weatherhouse, and Gypsy agreed with William Morris that the Useful is not incompatible with the Decorative.

“The time has come, Ginger,” said Gypsy, “for us to take things seriously.”

“I know it,” said Ginger, picking up an odd length of sausages and beginning to skip to the old tune of

“Andy Spandy,
Sugardy Candy,
French
Almond
Rock!

Breadandbutterforyoursupper’sallyourMother’s
GOT!”

“It’s all very well,” said Gypsy, between hammer-strokes, “for us to be light-hearted in our own lives, and even in the comparatively grave matter of earning our living; but as well as that we must remember that the world is full crying of evils——”

"You can't really skip with sausages," said Ginger, giving it up.

"Just hand that length over, if you've quite done with it," said Gypsy. "The West Frieze wants completing."

"I'll dust them off a bit first," said Ginger. "What do the evils cry for?"

"Reform," said Gypsy.

"Then let's reform them," said Ginger. "But we needn't cry along with them, need we?"

"That," said Gypsy, "would merely be piling Peleus on Ossian." (I think I mentioned that he had got his education in Cambridge; but his classics were good enough for Ginger, who had never got her education anywhere.) "No," he said, festooning the final sausage, "it's no use crying over spilt evils. It's better to mop them up laughing. How do you like that, darling?"

"The *line* is beautiful," said Ginger, putting her head on one side and shutting

her eye on the other. "But the colour-scheme is pasty."

"It improves in the frying-pan," said Gypsy. "But enough of Aesthetics. Let us return to Sociology. What evil are *you* going to reform?"

"Twenty seconds," pleaded Ginger.

He took out his watch.

"Time!" called Gypsy, as Ginger called, "Got mine!"

"Got mine too!" said Gypsy. "What's yours?"

"Croquet!" cried Ginger.

"Bamboo furniture!" cried Gypsy. "Why do you want to reform croquet? I rather like croquet, and I play it rather well."

"The better the worse!" said Ginger fiercely.

"You feel this subject passionately," said Gypsy thoughtfully.

"Yes, I do."

"Perhaps you play it badly?"

“That’s got nothing to do with it,” said Ginger quickly. Then she contradicted herself still more quickly. “Yes, it has, though. However you play croquet has to do with it. The only thing is not to play it at all. Croquet is the root of all the ill-temper there is. If you could once kill the spirit of croquet throughout the world, there’d be no more wars.”

“How will you start?” asked Gypsy.

“With a forceps,” said Ginger promptly. “The strongest forceps owned by the most famous dentist in New York, because American dentists are the best. Then I shall go all over the world in the middle of the night, pulling up all the hoops on all the croquet-lawns I can find.”

“Like so many double-teeth,” said Gypsy.

“And I hope they’ll hurt,” said Ginger vindictively.

“I’m sorry you feel it so bitterly,” said Gypsy, “but I suppose things have to be

felt like that before they can be reformed."

"Don't *you* feel bamboo like that?"

Gypsy shuddered. "I had an aunt in Wisbech once," he said. "She died of a tea-heart."

"I'm sorry," said Ginger gently.

"Oh, it didn't matter," said Gypsy. "After all she had to die of something, and it's much better to die of what you like than of what you don't. Men and women die of tobacco and tea with enthusiasm, where they would only resent death from German Measles or Mexican Gulps."

"Do people die of Mexican Gulps?" asked Ginger.

"They would if they got it," said Gypsy, "but they don't."

"It sounds like geography," said Ginger, "and I very nearly died of that when I was a child. So I was inoculated against it, and I don't even know where Wisbech is."

“It’s not important,” said Gypsy. “But if you live in Wisbech and buy enough tea at a certain shop, you can in time furnish your house from attic to basement with gratis bamboo. Why, you couldn’t buy two ounces without a bamboo bonus in the shape of a walking-stick or a curtain-pole; and for a whole pound, of course, you got hatstands and overmantels. After a while there were bamboo hatstands on every landing, and bamboo overmantels under as well as over all the mantelpieces. We were presently obliged to take all our meals at separate little bamboo tables, like the best boarding-houses and the worst tea-shops. Of course, the little tables wore out very quickly, quite often giving way in the joints in the middle of meals, but more and more came along, and we never succeeded in living them down. We sat on bamboo stools while we ate, and there were bamboo waste paper baskets and book-

cases, and a bamboo side-board, and I *think* a bamboo piano. I know there were bamboo beds. Mine broke down every other night, but my aunt was such a confirmed tea-drinker that a new one always appeared next day." Here Gypsy suddenly stood on his head, kicking his feet in the air, and letting out prolonged wails like a dog made miserable by the moon. Then he got down and sat up again, and Ginger who, as he spoke, had turned paler and paler, held his hands very tight, and they remained silent until they both felt better.

Then Gypsy groaned, "Yet cities could be such beautiful places."

"Yes," sighed Ginger, "if it weren't for the people in the red brick houses having all the almond trees. People who live in the grey stone houses ought to have them. But the first almond trees in London *always* bloom against red brick."

"I know," growled Gypsy, growing wild-

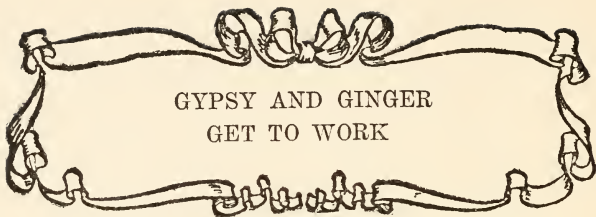
eyed again. "And then, the corrugated iron! Oh, *galvanize* the man who first thought of corrugating iron."

"There's a worse evil than corrugated iron," whispered Ginger. "There are wired flowers. Wired flowers are as dreadful as caged birds. We won't interfere with the Groundsel Man's job, but oh, Gypsy! to-night I'm going out to un-wire all the flowers in Piccadilly!" Her eyes shone like the Gemini as she said it.

"Brave child!" said Gypsy. "But before you go, put the flat-irons on the brazier, please."

"What for?" said Ginger.

"Because," said Gypsy, "I shall go out and uncorrugate the iron."



You may remember the Season, not so very long ago, when Londoners used to wake up every morning wondering Well Really What Next. A good many surprising and beautiful things happened during those brief weeks, and they were all due to the nocturnal efforts of Gypsy, Ginger, and their friends.

At first Ginger stuck to her pet reform of Unwiring Flowers, and Gypsy to his of Uncorrugating Iron. Not a night passed without some suburb having all its roses unmuzzled. Not a night passed without the roof of some Army Hut or Tennis-Club Pavilion being straightened out by Gypsy's flat-iron. The process, of course, exactly doubled the length of the roof, so that yards used to jut out at either end.

The Tennis-Players were considerably annoyed; and in the Army, Fatigue Duty resolved itself into sitting on the roof with a pair of curling-tongs, and crinkling the roofs back to their normal proportions. The soldiers who had been hair-dressers were the best at it, and some really beautiful work in Marcel Waving was put in by the experts for the Y.M.C.A. The Army minded it less than the Sportsmen, for they might just as well corrugate the iron on the roof as pick up the Woodbine stumps on the floor. But Gypsy was practically the death of local sport that summer, all the club-time being occupied in doing up what he had undone overnight. He gave some trouble, too, to Nonconformists and Sheltered Cabmen.

But Gypsy didn't really want to stop sport. He liked sport. He himself could put such a twist on a serve that it would come back and hit his partner of its own accord; and in the cricket-field he never

hit anything under Boundaries and Catches at Cover. His Innings consisted of exactly one of each. At the beginning of his Club Season the Scorer always made out his analysis in advance to save trouble:

	Average
GYPSY	4

it would run. If everyone had played Gypsy's sort of cricket there would have been no need to talk of brightening the game. His cricket was as bright and as brief as a lucifer. It favoured the two-hour match. So he was really sorry to make the Houndsditch Hatters' Second Eleven spend all their practice time in crinkling the pavilion roof. Also it vexed him to work on the system of Penelope's Web. Presently he took to clipping the ends off the roofs after they were straightened. This checkmated the Cricketers and Tennis-Players, because when they at-

tempted to re-corrugate the roof there wasn't enough of it left over to keep out the weather. So they had to send for some more.

During the days of waiting Gypsy turned the time to account, and ironed out all the Cabmen's Shelters on the No. 11 Bus route. But somebody else was now beginning to make good use of his efforts. An Unknown Quantity was also mysteriously at work under the moon.

One night, as Ginger was going home bent nearly double under a great load of rusty wires after a busy hour among the lilies of Sloane Square, she met Gypsy, flat-iron in hand, staring at one of his flattened rooms like a man in a trance.

"What are you looking at?" asked Ginger.

"That!" said Gypsy, pointing upward.

She shifted her faggot and gazed at the roof, which bore this legend in luminous white paint:

THERE IS NO TRUTH IN THE RUMOUR THAT
THIS UGLY IF UTILITARIAN ROOF IS TO
BE REPLACED WITH A BEAUTIFUL THATCH

“Why did you do that?” asked Ginger.

“I didn’t,” said Gypsy.

“Who did, then?”

“I haven’t the faintest idea,” said Gypsy.

It was only the beginning. Soon his other roofs began to be adorned with similar statements. A shelter in Kensington inquired:

WHO HAS BEEN CIRCULATING THE FICTION
THAT OLD WEATHER-STAINED TILES ARE
THE LATEST FASHION FOR CABMEN?
THEY ARE NOT!

And a Canteen in Putney asserted:

THE REPORT IS ABSOLUTELY UNFOUNDED
THAT BEFORE LONG THIS UNPREPOSSESSING
WILL RESEMBLE THE LOG-CABINS OF
THE EARLY SETTLERS

These suggestions, and others equally

attractive, were gradually being negatived on iron roofs in every quarter of London.

If Gypsy and Ginger were mysteries to the Cricket-Clubs and Flower-sellers, the unknown Luminous Painter was a mystery to them. But at last they discovered him.

They had taken half an hour off one night to look at the pattern of the moon on the river, and they found him standing in the middle of Westminster Bridge. He was very tall and lean, and wore a tight frock-coat that was quite a good green. It had once been rather a poor black. His soft felt hat was also green, and even he did not know what its first colour was. When they caught sight of him he was engaged in removing the hat from his head with an exquisite gesture, and bowing right and left with an unexampled grace. But for themselves there was nobody else on the bridge, yet he performed his courtly salute again and again, north and south, east and west. His deportment was as ex-

pressive as it was beautiful; it expressed deference without humility, airiness without impudence, and it paid a compliment not only to the recipient, but to the executor, of the bow.

“What *are* you doing?” cried Ginger, advancing with an involuntary curtsy.

The individual almost swept the ground with his hat.

“Madam,” he said, sweetly, “I am Bowing to the Circumstances.”

“What Circumstances?” inquired Ginger.

“My own Circumstances, madam. They require it of me frequently. They require it, alas! of many people. But it is one of the Lost Accomplishments of the age. One of the many. These things were once done with a grace——!”

He dusted and replaced his hat. “They stand saluted!” he said.

“I don’t believe that Circumstances which require bowing to *ought* to be

saluted," objected Ginger. "Why do you bow to them?"

"In acknowledgment, dear madam," said the shabby gentleman, "that I am not what I was."

"What were you?" asked Ginger.

"A Professor, madam."

"And what are you?" asked Gypsy.

"At the moment, sir, I am Contradictor of Rumours."

"You contradict them on my roofs!" cried Gypsy.

"I have that honour, sir," said the ex-Professor.

9. The Professor of
Neglected Accomplishments



GYPSY AND GINGER'S FRIENDS

"It was you," said Gypsy, "who contradicted the rumour that the Kilburn Tennis-club was to re-roof itself in Horsham Slate?"

"The most beautiful of all roofings, sir. Yes, it was I."

"It was you," said Gypsy, "who refuted the suggestion that the Nonconformist Chapels should return to Ancient Greece——"

"In the matter of architecture, sir. That also was I."

"It was you," continued Gypsy, "who

denied the unfounded report that the tops of the Whitechapel Shelters were to be converted into Hanging-Gardens."

"Myself, sir, and no other."

"Who said there *were* to be Hanging-Gardens in Whitechapel?" asked Gypsy.

"Nobody, sir."

"Then why do you say there are *not* to be?"

"Well, it's true, sir, isn't it?"

"It's so true," said Gypsy, "that why waste paint on it?"

"Because," said the ex-Professor, "no truth can resist persistent denial for ever. That is—yes, I fear I am getting mixed. But have you not observed how the newspapers will frequently force a statement on you, or at least lodge a suspicion in you, by contradicting some rumour of which you've never heard until they say it isn't true? The affirmation was negative, the denial is positive. When they've denied it long enough, day after day, in

every column from the Leaders to the Book Reviews, it becomes an unshakeable fact. I am at present devoting my life to establishing rumours by denying them. Once public opinion swallows them, the rest is automatic. I have energetically denied the rumour, for instance, of a Red Noah's Ark in Bermondsey. It would cheer Bermondsey greatly. And before long I really hope to see in Whitechapel those Hanging Gardens, which, as I have repeatedly stated, are not for one instant under consideration by anybody."

"What a tophole idea!" said Gypsy.

"The credit is not all mine, sir," said the ex-Professor. "Let us give the newspapers their due. Contradicting the Rumour is one of the more modern accomplishments, and smacks of modern manners; in other days we should have preferred Dallying with the Notion, but we cannot look for the old-world polish in the newspaper of to-day. If it has not the

culture of the Eighteenth Century, it does not lack dexterity; and in the art of Forcing the Statement it is as deft as a conjuror with a pack of cards. Yet—a vulgar art!” The ex-Professor sighed. “I never taught it myself.”

“What *did* you teach?” asked Ginger curiously.

“A hundred activities and accomplishments which are now treated in the most perfunctory fashion, madam. Have you ever, may I ask, Risen to the Occasion?”

“Never,” said Ginger.

“I’ve tried to,” said Gypsy. “It seldom came off.”

“And why? You had never studied it, sir. It is an acquired art which in theory should be taught in the schoolroom, in practice in the gymnasium. How,” he continued with fire, “without our Text-books and Classes can we perfect ourselves in the arts which make life replete with *finesse*? How many of us are conversant

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with the most graceful way of Receiving an Impression? For the most part we Receive our Impressions anyhow, at hap-hazard. We should Receive them as we would our guests. Again which of us can really felicitously Rejoice in the Name of —Alfred, or Ernest, or Harriet, as the case may be? The human being does not live who cannot be said to Rejoice in some such Name. But does he? Does he, in fact, know how? Of course he does not; he was never taught how. It took me years of toil before I could Rejoice in the Name of Valentine. My first attempts were gauche. But I succeeded at last.”

“*We* Rejoice in *our* Names,” said Ginger, and told him them.

His eye brightened. “Who would not Rejoice in such Names? There is a tongue in the cheek of either of them. But I take it they are not Baptismal?”

“Does that affect the question?” asked Gypsy.

“To a certain extent (and let us not be callous—some Questions are so easily Affected, although others, of sterner calibre, have to be Begged),” said the ex-Professor. “No, it is chiefly in the Names bestowed on us by M or N, that we are said to Rejoice. It can often only be done with an effort.

“What we need,” said the ex-Professor ardently, “is expert guidance on all those subtleties which we are asked to do by intuition: as though one could Jazz, or Throw the Discobolus, by intuition! Repeatedly the Social Code requires you to Contain Yourself, a thing possibly to be achieved by a stern suppressive course of Somebody’s System, but whose? What branch of physical training will develop in us the muscular fitness needed in Exercising the Prerogative and Adhering to the Principle? What Polytechnic offers us a course of instruction in Drawing the Comparison, Creating the Precedent, Im-

proving the Hour, Making Good? Who will educate us in the fine shades of those more negative accomplishments, Ignoring the Facts, Withdrawing the Confidence, and Leaving Well Alone? And It! there's so much to be done with It! A three years' course might be devoted alone to Turning It Over, Letting It Slide, Cutting It Fine, Making the Best of It, Overdoing It, Chancing It, Chucking It. . . .

"I look forward to the day when these things shall be the staple subjects of our Board Schools, Intellectually and Athletically; when, after a concentrated hour spent in class Accounting for Tastes or Changing the Opinion, the children shall troop jollily across the asphalte playground Leaping at Conclusions, Dodging the Question, and Casting the Doubt. Here a group of merry girls are Going to Extremes, yonder a band of breathless boys are Stopping at Nothing. Further off the School Glutton is greedily Eating his

Words or Chewing the Cud of Thought, while the School Miser is bent on Doing It for Two Pins and Profiting by the Example. In a secluded corner, alas! the School Bully will frequently be found Twisting a Meaning, Stifling an Oath, or Strangling a Conviction, for boys will be boys, and Human Nature does not change. And perhaps it never will until an accomplishment common to half mankind has been eliminated, and we cease to be born past-masters and mistresses in Believing the Worst."

"Don't be downhearted," said Ginger optimistically; "there's always the other half of mankind, you know."

"I am indebted to you, dear madam," said the ex-Professor, "for reminding me of it."

"Used you really to teach all these things?" asked Gypsy.

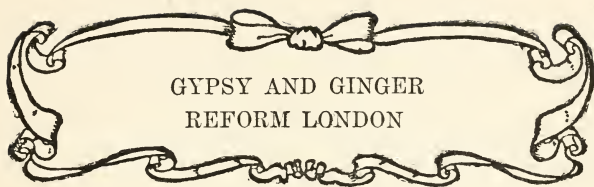
"For a short while only. I endeavoured to interest the Board of Education, but

forty years later the War came along too soon. Instantly all the Boards in England became exclusively composed of Recruiting-Sergeants, to whom but one of my arts appealed—that of Calling up the Old Reminiscence. It was my ruin.”

He sighed; then hastily bowed right and left once more, and rose up smiling.

“We waste time,” he said. “We might have been Contradicting Rumours this hour gone by. Believe me, the roofs of corrugated London shall yet be beautified.”

“And why should it stop there?” cried Ginger with enthusiasm. “Once we begin to Contradict Rumours, there’s simply no limit to what we can deny. When the Freedom of the Flowers is fully established I shall take this up with you. Why, in time we might reform all London!”



GINGER was as good as her word. And as her word was always good enough for Gypsy, he added his efforts to hers in Contradicting Rumours with all his might. One by one they enlisted their friends in the scheme, at first directing their efforts, but soon leaving them to their own devices. Except Rags, who followed Ginger about like a little dog. The wires from the released roses had all been given to Rags, who swore he had a use for them; and he evidently had, for he got a brand-new pair of second-hand boots on the strength of them. So he had no compunction in letting him tramp the streets with her at night.

Her first idea was to do something for the Orphans. As she said shuddering to the little man, "Those hats, Rags!"

So one morning London awoke to find placards to this effect on every Orphan Asylum in and round the town:

WE CANNOT IMAGINE WHENCE THE FABRICATION
AROSE THAT ORPHANS ARE TO WEAR LIBERTY HATS
THIS SUMMER

This idea was presented daily to London just at the moment when she had begun to digest the possibility of a substitute for Corrugated Iron. Indeed, some rather beautiful timbered roofs were already under way in Hackney, and Turnham Green was discussing the relative merits of thatch *versus* tiles. Whitechapel too had cottoned to the notion of Hanging Gardens. The Cabmen's Shelters were becoming positive bowers, as the ex-Professor reported with great satisfaction at the Weatherhouse, where everybody assembled regularly at daybreak to discuss the next night's plan of action.

Ginger was overjoyed. "What a delightful sight it must be," she said, "to

see the Cabmen hanging in the Gardens, as they drink their gingerbeer.”

“And dream of Babylon,” added Gypsy.

“*Quite* so,” said the Taxi-Man.

The scheme succeeded from the first. Ginger and Rags had not much trouble with the Orphans. They had not even to wait for Public Opinion; the Orphan Asylums themselves soon saw no reason why the above Fabrication should remain one.

On the day the Orphans began to troop through London in graceful hats with coloured scarves and happy faces, the Public was confronted everywhere with this announcement (Gypsy’s):

NO! IT IS *NOT* TRUE THAT THE MEMBERS OF
THE STOCK EXCHANGE ARE GIVING A BEANFEAST
TO ALL THE POOR CHILDREN IN BETHNAL GREEN

This took more doing. But nine days of incessant repudiation got on the Members’ nerves. They began to find it diffi-

cult to look strangers in the eye. They began to observe how studiously their friends refrained from references to Bethnal Green in their presence. They began to feel that they were shabby fellows. And hang it all! *why* wasn't it true that they were giving a Beanfeast to the Children of Bethnal Green? *why shouldn't* they give a Beanfeast if they wanted to?

In the end Bethnal Green got such a Beanfeast as it had never dreamed of in all its young life.

After this the surprises came fast and thick. Under the obstinate influence of contradiction, the owners of almond and pink may trees in red-brick houses transferred these voluntarily to the front gardens of dwellers in white or grey stone houses. The aesthetic advantage would not be visible till next spring, but London was beginning to be endowed with a sense of vision.

There were also immediate reforms in

the front gardens, whose beds defied at last the rigid and time-dishonoured conscription of marguerite, geranium, and lobelia. It was the dawn of a floral era wilder, more exquisite, and much more experimental.

And Society ceased to wear Humming-birds in its Hats—this was perhaps Ginger's greatest triumph. It was a stiff battle. After heavy nights of repudiation she would come back to the Weatherhouse such a rag, that even her devoted little follower couldn't have sold her at a penny a pound. But she won at last. She had two strong posters on the subject; one denying strenuously that feathers were old-fashioned, the other ridiculing the suggestion that a strip of gaily-embroidered house flannel, frayed and fringed, was Millinery's *Dernier Cri*. It attracted the attention of LOUISE, who immediately exhibited a model on these lines in her windows. The Duchesses fell to it, and the Humming-Birds were saved.

As I said, Gypsy and Ginger allowed their friends to follow their own fancies.

WHAT MISINFORMED PERSON HAS BEEN
SPREADING THE REPORT THAT SHRIMPS AND
LOBSTERS ARE TO CHANGE PRICES
EVERY OTHER DAY

ran Rags' best effort (Ginger helped him with the spelling).

A FALSE WHISPER HAS GOT ABROAD THAT THE
BENCHES AS WELL AS THE WICKET-KEEPERS IN
LORD'S CRICKET GROUND ARE TO BE
PADDED THIS SEASON

(This was the Taxi-Man's.)

WE HAVE IT ON THE VERY BEST AUTHORITY
THAT OLIVE AND MYRTLE TREES WILL
NOT BE PLANTED FROM END TO END
OF THE CITY ROAD

(Tonio.)

THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT SKY-ROCKETS ARE TO BE
LET OFF EVERY SATURDAY NIGHT ON STREATHAM
COMMON CAN OBVIOUSLY ONLY BE REGARDED
AS A PRACTICAL JOKE

(The Balloon Woman.)

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

(asked the Pavement Artist—)

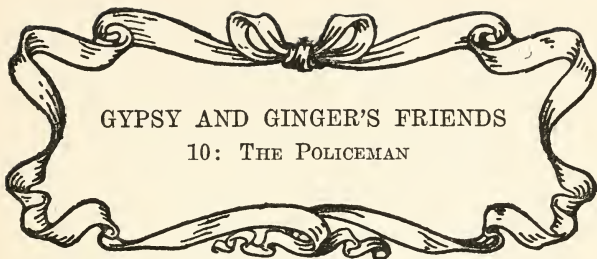
WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FABULOUS ASSERTION
THAT THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA WILL
PERFORM DURING THE LUNCHEON HOUR AT
SAM ISAAC'S FISH-SHOPS?

One after another these seeds bore fruit—and as many other seeds, all bearing on the comfort or the gaiety of the Metropolis.

It was the Punch-and-Judy Man who, affected by the weariness of the City Clerks waiting an hour in queue to book their tickets in the Tubes, induced Madame Clara Butt, Sir Harry Lauder, and Mdlle. Adeline Genée, to attend the principal stations at going-home time, and relieve the tedium with song and dance. It only wanted suggesting to these kind-hearted artists that nobody expected such a thing of them. They responded at once.

It was a still greater surprise when Sir Joseph Lyons, after Jeremy's emphatic assertion to the contrary, opened a Free-Penny-Bun-Shop on the Embankment for children under twelve with an income of less than Twopence a Week.

London was becoming a really beautiful place to live in.



GYPSY AND GINGER'S FRIENDS

10: THE POLICEMAN

BUT while the General Public grew daily more responsive to the nocturnal suggestions of Gypsy, Ginger, and their friends, the Authorities began to take alarm. Reforms were occurring at a pace which made them giddy. And London was acquiring a taste for Initiative which bothered them. Initiative was their feudal prerogative. They had given it a good run for its money in 1066, and now, like an old blind petted house-dog, kept it tenderly on the Westminster hearthrug, and gave it soft sops for its aged gums. Yet somehow this summer it had escaped and run amok: they heard it barking like a young pup, and saw it wag its tail in every street.

And wherever it went London voluntarily arrayed herself in *Couleur de Rose*. The Authorities had always preferred her in the stronger tone of Red Tape. They had been saying to her for so many years, "Red is your Colour, dear," that she nearly believed it, and they did quite.

So they sent to Scotland Yard for a Policeman, and gave him a Roving Commission. Policemen are generally born to their Beat; it is extremely difficult to detach any of these men from his walk in life, and, in the older Constabulary families, where the Beat is entailed, it is impossible. But now and again a Younger Son is born for whom it is awkward to provide. One of these was hanging around the Yard that summer, and it was he who was told off to perambulate London at his own free will, and discover the conspiracy that was turning sacred institutions topsy-turvy. At headquarters the conspirators were registered as The Moonshiners.

Lionel was enchanted with his job.

It was Gypsy who was the first to scent a public danger at large in lamplit London. The Regular Policeman is not the public danger you might suppose. He goes like a metronome, and you have only to time his beat. Between his two appearances practically anything can be done. But the Roving Constable is another question altogether. At any moment he may take you by surprise, like a rainbow in April.

He took Gypsy by surprise outside a baker's shop in Kentish Town, opposite a Bus-stop. That night Gypsy was making a round of the Bus-stops, denying a rumour that Moving Staircases were being contemplated by the Omnibus Companies to Save the Conductresses' Feet. Gypsy had just let the Regular Policeman go by, and was about to paint his sign in peacock blues and greens on the baker's window, when Lionel tapped him on the shoulder.

"Wot are you doing here?" said Lionel.

It is the first question given under the heading "Burglars" in the *Policeman's Guide to Conversation*.

Gypsy was used to taking situations in at glances. He instantly saw that the whole fabric of the Moonshiners was threatened, and he answered with great presence of mind,

"I am trying to steal a plum cake."

"Wot for?" said Lionel.

"Because I could do with it," said Gypsy engagingly. And it was true. Gypsy never paused to consider his interior without discovering that he could do with plum cake.

"'Ow were you thinking of stealing it?" asked Lionel.

"I was going to try to smash the window," said Gypsy.

"I'm serprised at you," said Lionel sternly. "Think of the row you'd 'ave made, and everybody tired out wanting their night's rest."

"I should have tried to smash it quietly," said Gypsy.

"I'm surprised at you," said Lionel still more sternly. "You might 'ave cut your pore 'and."

He put his own hand in his pocket and gave Gypsy sixpence. "Now don't you go making no more disturbances," he said. "There's a coffee stall up the street, second on the left. Move on."

"Robert," said Gypsy warmly, "where do you live?"

"Winchester Mews, N.W. 3," said Lionel, "and my name's Lionel. Move on."

"It's no name for the Beaten Track," said Gypsy thoughtfully.

"I don't follow no Beaten Track," said Lionel. "All London's my Beat, and the Moonshiners is my mark. And as sure as my name's wot it is, one of these fine nights I'll run 'em to earth."

"Wouldn't it be better," said Gypsy,

looking at the moon, "to run them to heaven?"

"Wot do you take me for?" asked Lionel with dignity. "A member of the Air-Force? Move on."

Gypsy moved on, drank his coffee and ate his slab of cake in Lionel's name, and hurried back to do his sign. But instead of saying "The Conductresses' Feet" it now said,

THE CONDUCTRESSES' POOR FEET

This human note (due entirely to Lionel) touched the General Omnibus Co.'s heart, and it convened a Board-Meeting on the spot. But long before that Gypsy had hastened home and conveyed the tidings to his fellow-conspirators. He was always a little excitable in telling a tale, and he swore that as Lionel left him he threw behind him on the pavement the shadow, not of a man, but of Scotland Yard, which by some trick of the moon with a cloud changed to the shadow of a Handley-Page,

and finally spread itself to the semblance of a flying angel.

Mrs. Green said, "You and your fancies, nonsense!"

But the Night Watchman said, "Of course. A human being can throw any shadow he pleases, or doesn't please. If you want to know a man, look at his shadow by moonlight."

Everybody began at once to look at everybody else's shadow, and to hide his own; and for a little while the shadows flickered over Trafalgar Square like flowers in the wind, and birds on the wing, and swimming fish. Just as you thought you had a man he would slip his shadow into that of Nelson, or a Lion, or a Church, or a Hotel, or the National Gallery, and you lost him. Shadow Hide-and-Seek became rather a favourite pastime round the Weatherhouse after this.

But to-night the Taxi-Man soon called them to order.

“Enough of shadows,” he commanded. “We’re up against a danger, and it’s got to be tackled. If our work’s to go on, Lionel must be diddled.”

“But who’s to diddle him?” asked Ginger.

“The Picadilly Flower-Girls,” said the Taxi-Man.



GYPSEY AND GINGER'S FRIENDS

II. The Piccadilly Flower Girls

THE Piccadilly Flower-Girls were fascinating people with fragrant names like Lily, Rose and Violet. It was these damsels, or their grand-mothers, whom the Taxi-Man declared he had delivered from dragons during the Discovery of London. They would, he said, do anything for him.

"Out of sheer gratitude?" asked Ginger.

"Not a bit of it," said the Taxi-Man. "Out of sheer joy. And if Lionel can resist 'em, he's not the Roving Policeman I take him to be."

“Lionel mustn’t be hurt,” said Gypsy. “I love Lionel, and if the pillar-box runs to it I’m going to leave a Buszard Cake on his Winchester Mews doorstep to-morrow. It will be a plum cake with almond icing, and I shall have it frosted an inch thick, with pink sugar doves, and LIONEL done on it in silver balls, like bits of quicksilver on the carpet when you break the puzzle by accident.”

“I used to break it on purpose,” said Ginger. “Mother always said I mustn’t eat them.”

“Good gracious, I should think not!” said Gypsy.

“I mean the silver balls,” said Ginger. “I don’t know why, but I was never allowed to eat the silver balls till I was ten years old.”

“She was afraid of you choking,” said Mrs. Green.

“I knows a perfectly wunnerful cure for hiccups,” mentioned Rags.

"Don't tell me," said Gypsy quickly. "I and my brothers never discouraged hiccups. I held the Hiccup Gold-Belt with a record of 127. An interval of three minutes brought the break to a close. The last thirty seconds used to be a fearful struggle. It is my brother Albert who holds the Silver Sneezing Cup. If you held it through three successive Epidemics, you kept it. He was passionately devoted to sneezing. When he was nine he made out a list of twenty things he liked best in the world. The First was Sneezing and the Second was Mother. He had no equal, too, in blowing out candles with his nose."

"You never told me about your brother Albert before," said Ginger.

"Would it have made any difference?" asked Gypsy, so anxiously that she hastened to reassure him. And whenever Ginger began to reassure Gypsy about

anything, or Gypsy Ginger, it was time for their friends to go.

The next night the Piccadilly Flower-Girls came into action. The plan was very simple. Four Girls were told off to every Moonshiner, and two watched at each end of the street in which their protégé was at work. As soon as Lionel appeared in the distance, one would fly to warn—Ginger, or Jeremy, as the case might be, while the other stayed behind to diddle Lionel for exactly one minute. Any policeman can be diddled for that length of time. Then he reverts to type. But Rose in her radiant shawls, shedding damask petals like confetti round Lionel's bewildered feet: or Lily floating her silver scarf before Lionel's dazzled eyes, leaving one ivory bloom upon his helmet as she vanished: or Violet in her dusky veil, rising from the purple shadows to murmur music in Lionel's intoxicated ear: was

enough to dissolve the force of habit in any official—for sixty seconds.

Then Rose danced by, or Lily melted into thin air, or Violet sank shyly back into her shades; and Lionel turned the corner and discovered—Ginger, or Jeremy, as the case might be. And either would be seated in the middle of the road on a camp-stool inside a square of rope.

This was the Night Watchman's idea. Any man, he said, sitting publicly inside a square of rope, will be taken for granted. Not even a policeman will question his position; the man inside the rope is as Cæsar's Wife. For one thing, he must have been put there, and when one has already been handled by a higher power, one need not be re-handled by a lesser. It is only when one is obviously handling oneself that Authority smells danger. And nobody, said the Night Watchman ever really thinks that a man could be such a fool as deliberately to put himself inside a rope.

So every Moonshiner now went forth with rope and campstool, and each in turn discovered the wisdom of the Night Watchman. One by one they made Lionel's acquaintance, and one by one they loved him.

He had to be loved, he was so trustful. For instance, he trusted Ginger. A woman inside the ropes would have aroused any other policeman's sense of the unusual. Even he, struck by her sex, said when they encountered, "Wot are you doing here?" She answered, "Oh, Women on the Land, you know," and he believed her at once.

Then there was the case of Jeremy.

The first time he found Jeremy sitting inside his rope, he said, "Wot are you doing here, you're no night watchman. You're a street hawker, I seen you last Friday selling paper windmills in Farringdon Street."

"That wasn't I," said Jeremy, "that was my unfortunate brother Albert."

"Oh, sorry," said Lionel. "Wot was his misfortune?"

"Besides his name, he got mislaid last Saturday, and hasn't been seen since," said Jeremy, and hid his face in his hands.

Lionel went away, delicately leaving his own pocket-handkerchief on Jeremy's knee, and put an advertisement about Albert in the "Missing" Column of *The People*. A good many Alberts turned up, and every night he brought them along to Jeremy for inspection, but they were all the wrong ones. At last Jeremy got tired of them, and told Lionel that he had had a dream about Albert dying in foreign waters. When he heard this Lionel borrowed his own handkerchief from Jeremy to blow his nose, and next day he laid a Cross of Immortelles on the Albert Memorial. It was all he could do now. There was a pleased paragraph about it in the *Morning Post*.

But Gypsy was a little put out. He told

Jeremy that he did think he might have drowned somebody else's brother; and then he crossed the road and had his brown boots blacked.

Soon Lionel began to make little *Rendezvous* with the different Moonshiners, noting the times in his engagement book, so that before long they knew exactly where to expect him at each half-hour through the night.

Rose and Lily, Lupin and Nemophila, were able to slack off a bit, and resume their dancing round the Piccadilly Cupid, which is the way the Flower-Girls like to spend their nights. All except Violet, who still haunted the purple shadows, and murmured fragments of song which Lionel vainly tried to recapture over breakfast. He would turn up at the *Rendezvous* with little gifts—a bottle of Asthma Cure for Mrs. Green, or a picture postcard of Mr. Matheson Lang as Shylock for Tonio. How could they help being fond of him?

Every day brought tokens of their affection to the Winchester Mews, N.W. 3; but Lionel never knew who it was that left plumcakes and violets and balloons at his door; or why one morning a floral arch was erected at the narrow entrance to the Mews with GOD BLESS OUR LIONEL done in red and white roses set in smilax.

He only knew that even a London Policeman's life can become a lovely thing.



GYPSY AND GINGER'S FRIENDS

12: THE PENNY PIPER

THE last days of July had been so hot that the pavements steamed all night with the memory of them. In the early mornings Ginger would wake in a thin haze that was itself like the last thin veil between sleep and consciousness. One Monday morning as she stretched her arms, she half-opened her eyes upon London breathing forth its mists, and half-opened her ears to the lost sounds of bleating sheep. Ginger at once became six years old again.

Every Monday morning when she was six, sheep had shuffled under her window along the misty street. And as soon as the unseen sheep had passed with an unseen dog and an unseen shepherd, an unseen piper had followed with a little tune upon a penny whistle. This was all a part of being six years old, and she never won-

dered about it then; but whenever she thought of it afterwards she wondered why any piper should play his tune so early in the morning, when even the housemaids were not yet on the doorsteps to throw him pennies. Listening to the sheep go by, she now wondered all this over again. While she was wondering, the last sheep bleated itself into the distance, and at the same instant a penny whistle began piping in the mist. It was the tune she had always, and only heard when she was six.

She lifted herself on one elbow, and saw Gypsy lifting himself on his. They looked at each other, and she saw that he was exactly eight years old.

“Did you ever see him?” asked Ginger in a whisper.

Gypsy shook his head. “Did you?”

Ginger shook hers. “I always longed to.”

“I wonder if there’s any way of catch-

ing him?" whispered Gypsy; and reaching stealthily for the pillar-box, he shook out a dozen coppers. Then he picked out the gold ones which were the fine-weather pennies (he himself was always given brown pennies), and span one through the haze in the direction of the tune. They heard it ring on the road, and the tune stopped, and a moment later mended its broken bar. Gypsy sent a second penny not quite so far, and in the pause they heard three soft steps come their way. The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth pennies fell shorter still, and the seventh penny was so close that a form stood up like a shadow on the mist. Even then they couldn't see the Piper very distinctly; but he was tall and thin, and Gypsy said he had the silver hair of a very old man, and Ginger said he had the blue eyes of the youngest babies.

But his gentle voice was neither young nor old as he said kindly, "What am I to do with seven pennies, children?"

“Spend them?” suggested Gypsy.

“That’s so difficult,” said the Piper.

“Spin them?” suggested Ginger.

“Ah, that’s easy,” said the Piper. And he sat down cross-legged a little way off on the pavement, and span one of the seven gold pennies. While it span he sang a song that began and ended with the penny.

“The fountain is dry,
The fountain is dry!
Let down your rain,
Blue sky, blue sky,
Or a child’s blue eye
Must let its rain
To fill his fountain
Up again.”

“What a nice song,” said Ginger. “Do spin another.”

So the Piper span the second penny and sang.

“The night will never stay,
The night will still go by,
Though with a million stars
You pin it to the sky,

Though you bind it with the blowing wind
And buckle it with the moon,
The night will slip away
Like sorrow or a tune."

The last note met the plop of the penny
on the pavement.

"How do you manage it?" asked Gypsy.

"It manages itself," said the Piper.
"None of my songs lasts longer than the
spin of a coin." He span the third penny
so badly that it only made a very little
song, like this:

"The tide in the river,
The tide in the river,
The tide in the river runs deep.
I saw a shiver
Pass over the river
As the tide turned in its sleep."

"Have you just come up the river?"
asked Ginger.

"No," said the Piper. "I have just
come from a chickory field under Graff-
ham. The Sussex chicory is as blue now,

as it will be, and the raspberries are ripening on the Downs.”

“Don’t!” implored Ginger, sitting up, “How could you bear to come to town?”

“I follow the sheep,” said the Piper, and span the fourth penny. While it turned he sang:

“As I was going through No Man’s Land
I saw an old man counting sand,
I saw a woman sauntering by
With wings on her head that could not fly,
After that I saw a child
Who from birth had never smiled.
These riddles are hard to understand,
They could only happen in No Man’s Land.”

“Have all those riddles got answers?” asked Ginger.

“I think so,” said the Piper, “but they’re harder to find in the city than in the country. They grow best in the grass, like men and flowers. The grass is mown now, and Sussex smells hay and hears corn.”

He twisted his fifth penny, and sang
while it hummed:

“If I had a lady
I’d give her pretty things,
Cowslip balls and daisy chains
And green grass rings.
I’d cut a fork of hazel
To find hidden wells,
And turn about we’d crack the nuts
And sail the nut-shells.
We’d love at first sight,
And marry on the spot,
I and the lady
That I haven’t got.”

“Gypsy!” cried Ginger. “I can’t bear
it any longer. Let’s go and live in a hut
in a wood.”

“If you want a nice hut,” said the
Piper, “I know where there is one on the
banks of a Southdown river, with martins
under the thatch.”

“But the Blacksmith’s Son lives in it,”
wailed Ginger, “with Lizzie Hooker.”

“It was empty,” said the Piper, “when
I saw it last.”

“How long ago was that?” asked Gypsy hopefully.

“A hundred and sixty years, I think,” said the Piper, “so I ought to be moving on, children.”

Before he rose he span his sixth penny, and while it twirled he moved away and sang as he went:

“I can pipe a song for that,
 And a song for this;
 You may pay me with an old straw hat,
 A crust or a kiss.
 I haven’t any use for pounds
 And little use for pence,
 While I whistle bits of rounds
 Sitting on a fence.
 You’ll learn them in a minute,
 And forget them in a day,
 And remember them in fifty years
 When I come your way.”

His voice died with the penny. And very far away they heard him once more pipe his Monday tune.

“Oh dear,” said Ginger restlessly, “I wish he’d told us what *that* tune was about. But I’m determined to remember every

one of his other songs to-morrow morning." (As a matter of fact she forgot them all, like the dreams we determine to remember in the middle of the night.)

"There's one of the songs he forgot himself," and Gypsy, picking up the seventh penny and spinning it. And while it span the distant piping seemed to turn to singing, but it was now such a long way off that I am not sure of Gypsy and Ginger got the words right.

"Oh, did you hear the sheep go by
 Upon a Monday morning?
 Did you hear the sheep go by
 Without a sign of warning?
 Did you hear the sheep go by?

They bleated through the London mist
 With plaintive sounds and muffled,
 They bleated through the London mist,
 They shuffled and they scuffled
 Bleating through the London mist.

They came from meadows fresh and green
 Which they had cropped together,
 They came from meadows fresh and green
 And they were going whither?
 They came from meadows fresh and green."



WHEN Ginger said she couldn't bear it any more, she meant it. She had lived in London well over two months now, and that was longer than she had ever lived anywhere else in her life. She had a terror of falling into grooves and never being able to climb out again. Besides, August was upon them, and London in August is no place for anybody. So Ginger said to Gypsy,

“We must be off.”

“How?” asked Gypsy.

“By the first train from the nearest station,” said Ginger positively.

Gypsy looked at the Trafalgar Tube and said, “Shall we go to the Elephant and Castle, or to Edgeware Road?”

Ginger shed three tears and said, "If I don't smell hay and hear corn to-day, I shall die."

Gypsy shook the pillar-box gravely. He shook it to the extent of fivepence halfpenny.

"How did the halfpenny get in?" he said sternly. "Has somebody been cheating?"

"No," said Ginger, "that was given me last Sunday by a poor child under twelve. What's the matter with you? Children under twelve are half-price for everything, aren't they?"

"Did you say a poor child?" asked Gypsy.

"Yes," said Ginger. "I gave it sixpence change. It was so extremely under twelve, you see. It said it would come again to ask the weather next Sunday and bring its cousins."

"Well, it's going to be disappointed," said Gypsy. "Though how we're to take

tickets to hay and corn on fivepence halfpenny, I don't quite know. We shall have to walk; unless we stay over to-morrow and put in a really hard day's work and earn our fares. What do you say to that?"

"Oh yes," said Ginger, "and then we can give a party to-night and say good-bye to everybody."

So they settled down to put in a really hard day's work. The day helped them a lot. It was a sultry, many-minded day; it did a variety of things with heavy heat-waves to begin with, and then it muttered in the distance, and shed a few big drops, and slacked off for a bit; then it rolled up a lot of dark blue clouds, and then a lot of black ones. Mr. Morley came over from his hotel to say that it was so dark in the Reading Room that the visitors couldn't read, and he wanted Gypsy's advice about turning on the electric light. Gypsy, half in and half out of his door, looked at the sky and said:

"I think you'd better turn it on."

Mr. Morley thanked him, and tipped him half-a-crown (they do it handsomely at Morley's).

"Can I have it in pennies?" asked Gypsy.

"Certainly," said Mr. Morley. He counted thirty pennies into Gypsy's hand, and crossed the road.

Then quite suddenly a blue cloud hit a black one, and Gypsy leapt out of his door as far as he could go, and the hail came down like peas and rattled in a box by the theatre-men. So Gypsy called "Hi! hi!" very loudly, and Mr. Morley, who had just got under the portico, came out and crossed the road again.

"Yes?" said Mr. Morley.

"I *know* you'd better turn it on," said Gypsy.

"Thank you very much," said Mr. Morley, and gave Gypsy five shillings.

"Can I have it in pennies?" shouted

Gypsy. (He had to shout because of the thunder.)

“Certainly,” shouted Mr. Morley, turning up his coat-collar a little too late, because ribbons of rain were already running down his neck from the guttering round his top hat. It took him a long time to count sixty pennies into Gypsy’s hands, which got very full; then Mr. Morley wasn’t certain he’d given him enough, and thought they’d better count them again to make sure. So they did, holding the pennies in their mouths or under their armpits, or between their knees, as they got them counted; and then Gypsy lifted him arm by mistake, to wipe the rain out of his eyes, and dropped a shillingworth. They rolled and splashed about Trafalgar Square, which could now be paddled in. Gypsy wasn’t allowed to leave his post, so Mr. Morley knelt down on his beautifully-pressed trousers, and crawled about the Square, finding the shilling one by one. It

took him some time, because he could hardly see for the water tumbling off his beautifully-ironed silk hat, and for the lightning making him start and say "Oh!" just as he was about to pick a penny up. But at last he brought them all back to Gypsy.

"So sorry to have troubled you," said Gypsy.

"Not at all," said Mr. Morley, because the Morley Hotel manners are faultless. Then he went back to the Hotel, and changed his boots, and turned on the light in the Reading-Room. And then the sun came out.

So he had to cross the Square again, and he found Ginger outside the Weatherhouse looking as nice as mixed ice-cream in a lovely summer smock.

"What delightful weather," said Ginger. "Why have you got the Hotel lights on?"

"Would you turn them out if you were

I?" asked Mr. Morley, for his grammar was as faultless as his manners.

"I would indeed," said Ginger sunnily; "seldom have I seen so blue a sky."

Mr. Morley tipped her handsomely (the information apart, her smile was worth it), lifted his hat to her, and fled.

"How fast he's going," said Gypsy, from the very back of the Weatherhouse. "What did he give you, darling?"

"A half-sovereign!" gasped Ginger. "A real old-fashioned half-sovereign!"

"No wonder he's running," said Gypsy. "But we must get it changed somehow."

"Oh, must we?" pleaded Ginger.

"Think of the Pillar-Box," said Ginger firmly. So they bought an evening newspaper which they didn't want, and told the Evening Newsboy to let the children know there'd be a party in the Square during the small hours. Then they put the pennies in the Pillar-Box. They had had

several other customers that day, and the Pound was nearly reached.

At ten minutes to seven an old lady in a black bonnet and corkscrew curls stepped up to ask the weather.

“Set fair, madam,” said Ginger.

“How much will that be?” said the old lady.

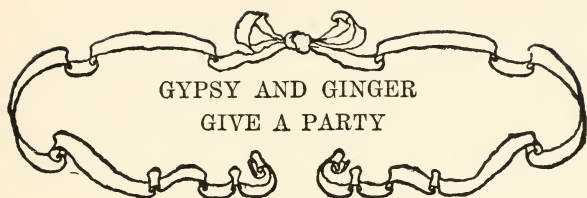
“One penny, madam,” said Ginger.

The old lady paid her penny. She was the Weatherhouse’s last customer. When they posted her penny the Pillar-Box burst.

“Hurrah!” } cried { Gypsy.
 “Hurrah!” } { Ginger.

The theatre crowd that evening found the Weatherhouse shutters up, and a placard outside saying:

THESE PREMISES ARE CLOSED.
 GYPSY AND GINGER ARE RETIRING
 FROM BUSINESS.



PEOPLE who have only seen London on Coronation Day, or Lord Mayor's Show Day, or on the day when the Ambassador of Calamiane is given the Freedom of the City, do not really know of what she is capable in the way of festival. All these occasions are foreseen and dress-rehearsed. The costume is provided in advance, and it is trusted that the spirit, as well as the body, may inhabit it on the day. But when the time comes it is usually about some business of its own; for in spite of the newspapers the spirit is not the body's house-dog. It doesn't come when it's whistled for. Its breed is tameless.

But when it springs out of its wilds it does in an hour what Committees cannot

do in six months. Only those who saw Trafalgar Square on the night of Gypsy and Ginger's party know what the spirit of London can do in an hour.

The Evening Newsboy spread the rumour of the party with the swiftness and ubiquity of evening news. He had the newsboy's art of subdividing a single rumour into a flight of swallows. Before midnight every slum in the city knew there was to be a party amongst the fountains of Trafalgar Square.

Gypsy and Ginger sat on the floor of the Weatherhouse making staircases of their two-hundred-and-forty pennies, and consulted how to spend them to the best advantage. They had quite forgotten their intention of spending them on railway tickets to Sussex.

"Which do you think the children would like best?" asked Gypsy. "Presents or supper?"

"Presents *and* supper," said Ginger.

"It won't run to both, darling. The guests will come in their thousands."

"But think of a whole pound."

"I know, but all the same," said Gypsy. He was really the practical one of the two. "If we decided on presents, a lot could be done with beads and marbles."

"If they had supper, we could give them farthing buns," said Ginger. "For a pound you can get a thousand farthing buns, more or less, I'm never sure which. But if there are thousands of children—."

"What about a Conjuror?" suggested Gypsy. "You ought to be able to buy quite a good Conjuror for a pound?"

"No," said Ginger, "we can be our own conjurors. And I want the children to have something that will really go round without giving out, and I've thought of what it is."

"Well?" said Gypsy.

"Sherbert," said Ginger. "Packets and packets of it. In the fountains."

“In one fountain,” said Gypsy, catching on with enthusiasm, “and lemonade crystals in the other.”

They went out to spend their pound. While they were absent, the Piccadilly Flower-Girls came and got to work. In a few minutes the Square was a garden of roses. Roses red and white, yellow and pink, garlanded the stone balustrades opposite the National Gallery and wreathed the basins of the fountains; arches of roses bloomed up the steps; the Weatherhouse was smothered in Crimson Ramblers; Dorothy Perkins climbed from the foot of the Nelson Column to the top of Nelson’s head, the base was mounded deep in moss, and every lion crouched in a temple of standards. Their work was barely accomplished when Mrs. Green arrived buried in balloons. They were gas balloons of every colour, and each was anchored with a fairy lamp, so that when

she let them go they hung in chains and patterns of light fifteen feet in air. The other Moonlighters were now appearing in full force. The Punch-and-Judy Man set up his theatre between the fountains, Tonio's striped and painted Hokey-Pokey booth was established in one corner, the Strawberry Girl had her great fruit-baskets in another. Jeremy, with an assortment of his brightest wares, turned the Weather-house into a Penny Toyshop. The Organ-Man and his barrel-organ took the middle of the Square, where there was plenty of room for dancing. The Muffin-and-Crum-pet Man walked round and round and round ringing his bell. They told him that for once he was out of season, but the Night Watchman said that the moon was blue to-night, so that anything could happen for once.

By the time Gypsy and Ginger returned, laden with packets of Sherbert and Lemonade Powder, the party was ready.

“Oh!” cried Ginger.

She dropped her parcels and dashed from attraction to attraction; flew one of Jeremy’s windmills round the Square, tasted a strawberry, ate half a hokey-pokey, rang the muffin-bell in Toby’s ear, stuck a rose in her smock, and seizing Gypsy’s hands danced him three times round the barrel-organ.

Then they all turned their attention to the fountains, and just as the sherbert got really fizzing the Evening Newsboy appeared with the children.

Not many parties begin in full swing, but Gypsy’s and Ginger’s did. The moment the children of London saw Trafalgar Square, a dream of balloons and roses under the blue moon, they began to laugh; and for two hours, whether they were dancing to the organ music as only London Children can dance: or watching Punch thwack Judy as only Punch can thwack: or eating crumpets, and strawberries, and

free ice-creams: or besieging the Weatherhouse for Jeremy's free toys, or lying on their stomachs over the fountains with their faces in the sherbert: or playing Touch-Stone with Lily, Rose and Jessamine around the Column: they never stopped laughing. When the Taxi-Man appeared astride of Snow-Flame, and put him through his loveliest circus-tricks below the fairy lights, their laughter was louder than ever. And when Gypsy, inspired by the sound of it, painted this sign in luminous paint on the National Gallery:

THERE IS NO TRUTH IN THE RUMOUR
THAT CHILDREN'S PARTIES WILL BE HELD IN
TRAFALGAR SQUARE ONCE A WEEK

their laughter was so loud that it was heard from Land's End to John o' Groats. It was so loud that it was heard by the Policeman in the Strand.

He blew his whistle.

In a trice the London Police were on the alert.



GYPSY AND GINGER MOVE ON

WHEN the Policeman on the Strand Beat blew his whistle, it was heard by every Policeman on every confine of London. But it was not heard in Trafalgar Square, because the party was by this time at its height. And while the Moonshiners sang and danced and rioted with the children, the policemen were answering the summons from Ealing to Barking, and from Crowdon to Crouch End. Through the silent streets they streamed in hundreds, like blue fire streaming noiselessly around a Christmas Pudding. From all points of

the compass they converged on Trafalgar Square.

Before they knew it, the Moonshiners were encircled.

It was the Night Watchman who gave the alarm, too late. Even he had been caught napping for once. He had been competing at Catherine Wheels with the Evening Newsboy when he ought to have been keeping an eye on the night. But now, as the foe advanced in massed formation through Pall Mall and Whitehall, the Strand and St. Martin's Lane, he scented them like a hound and cried: "The Police!"

Dead silence fell upon Traftalgar Square. Only the ex-Professor made any demonstration, and that was a mute one. Meekly, yet carelessly, he bowed to right and left.

"What are we going to do?" whispered Ginger.

The Moonshiners drew together and

consulted. The Taxi-Man was for defying the foe, but Ginger said,

“Think of the children.”

The Piccadilly Flower-Girls were for diddling the foe, but

“There aren’t enough of you,” said Gypsy.

“P’raps if we kep as still as mice,” said Rags, “they’d jest go away and not notice.”

But the Night Watchman looked at the thousands of children and roses and balloons, and at the luminous sign on the National Gallery, and said,

“Don’t count on it. The London Police have eyes like lynxes.”

“All right,” said Gypsy cheerfully.

We’re discovered. We’re trapped. But *you* shan’t suffer—it’s all me and Ginger” (he couldn’t be bothered with grammar at the moment), “and I’m going to tell them so. Come along, darling.”

And passing his arm around Ginger’s

waist he leaped with her to the head of the Lion who looks towards St. James's, and stood exposed to the gaze of the London Police.

The Strand Policeman advanced, and pointed with his truncheon to the legend on the National Gallery.

Gypsy gazed steadily down into his questioning eyes, and prepared to confess. As he opened his lips, the Strand Policeman saw a vision of rapid promotion, and Gypsy saw another of Six Months' Hard.

But before he had uttered the first word of his confession, a sharp command rang out upon the night.

"Move on!" it said.

It was the voice of Lionel. And out of the mossy bank of the Nelson Column, the form of Lionel rose. Gypsy and Ginger nearly fell off the Lion.

"Move on!" said Lionel sternly.

"Where to?" whispered Ginger.

“Where would you like to?” whispered Lionel.

“S-S-Sussex!” stammered Ginger.

“Get *down* orf that Lion!” thundered Lionel, and he shook his truncheon truculently at Gypsy and Ginger. “Can’t you see you’re obstructing traffic?” He cast an eye over the crowd of children and Moonshiners. “Get along ’ome,” he said to them briefly. “Move on!” he said to Gypsy and Ginger, still more briefly.

This time Gypsy and Ginger quite fell off the Lion. With Lionel at their backs they moved on. A way melted for them like magic through the serried ranks of the London Police. The Police made no protest. One of them had the matter well in hand; they heard from his lips the sacred formula which is the motor power of the Police and the Solar Systems.

“Move on!” said Lionel at punctuated intervals. “Move on! Move on!”

Gypsy and Ginger moved on, as in a

dream. They did not see the London Arabs shinning off to their respective slums; they did not see the London Police resume their respective beats, or the People of the London Streets return to their respective kerbs and cornerstones. With Lionel at their backs, they kept moving on. But it rather seemed as though it was the world, not they, that moved.

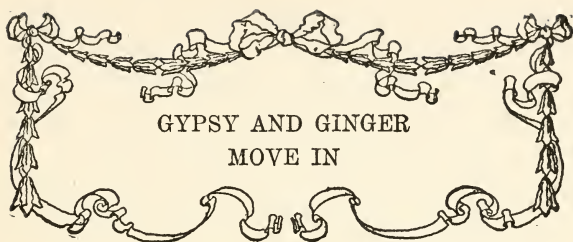
The silver water of the Thames and the black towers of Parliament went by them like visions. They saw the fiery smoke of Victorian trains stream by like dragon's breath. "Move on!" said Lionel. They heard the dogs of Hackbridge bay at the moon, and smelt the Mitcham Lavender. Box Hill rose like a dark wave on their left, and sank away as Leith Hill rose like another on their right. "Move on!" said Lionel. The woods of Surrey dissolved into the woods of Sussex. A river sleeping between pink willow herb and purple loosestrife curled before them. "Move

on!" said Lionel. A spur of the Downs rolled up like a green ball. A deep chalk road, cut like the Milky Way in the side of the hill, opened a channel for their feet. "Move on!" said Lionel.

Gypsy and Ginger moved on. At the top of the hill Ginger sat down all of a sudden.

"Lionel," said she, "I can't move another step."

But Lionel did not answer. When they turned their heads he was not there. He had just completed the longest move on the Police Records, and was now speeding back to Scotland Yard to throw up his Roving Commission.



GYPSY AND GINGER
MOVE IN

GYPSY and Ginger sat on the top of the Downs till daybreak. As the sun came up, Ginger uttered a cry.

“Oh!” said Ginger. “Look!”

Gypsy looked, and saw that they were on the end of one chain of hills that faced the end of another chain of hills. In the valley that lay between, a river ran very full and level among green grass and gold buttercups.

“There’s such a lot to look at,” said Gypsy. “Particularly what?”

“My cottage!” said Ginger, and rolled down the hill. Gypsy rolled after her. But she picked herself up first, shook her head, and was along the road like a hare.

He tracked her to the cottage by the things that fell out of her pockets, peppermints and pencils and penknives and tangles of string. Just as Gypsy arrived at the cottage Ginger was coming away from it. She looked extremely excited.

"Gypsy," she said, "it's empty! The Blacksmith's Son isn't there." (She had told him all about the Blacksmith's Son on the wedding-day.) "I'm going to see the Blacksmith."

They found the Blacksmith alone at work in the Forge. He looked round at them, and said to Ginger, "What d'ye want, missy?" "Where's your son?" asked Ginger. "Emigrated," said the Blacksmith. "When?" asked Ginger. "Day arter you was here," said the Blacksmith. "Where's Lizzie Hooker?" asked Ginger. "Emigrated," said the Blacksmith. "When?" asked Ginger. "Day arter that," said the Blacksmith. "What happened to them?" asked Ginger. "Mar-

ried. Ship-Ranch. Canada," said the Blacksmith. "Don't they want to live in the cottage?" asked Ginger. "No," said the Blacksmith. "Then," said Ginger, "I and Gypsy want to, please."

The Blacksmith scratched his chin with his hammer. "I'm sorry, missy," said the Blacksmith, "but for three hundred years, ever since that cottage were built, it's been kept in the family for one of the Blacksmith's sons."

"Have you any more sons?" asked Gypsy.

"None," said the Blacksmith.

"Will that one ever come back?" asked Gypsy.

"Never," said the Blacksmith.

"Adopt me!" said Gypsy.

The Blacksmith looked at Ginger, and adopted Gypsy. As soon as he'd done it, he gave them the key of the cottage and got on with his job.

Gypsy and Ginger went to the shop and

bought a pound of bulls' eyes and a bottle of gingerbeer; and then they walked back to the cottage and moved in.

THE END.

CENTRAL CIRCULATION
CHILDREN'S ROOM





